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ABSTRACT

Six papers address issues regarding services for families with handicapped members. An initial paper on "Family Awareness" by D. Darnell reviews the systems approach, notes the structure of family systems, and discusses characteristics of healthy families. D. Hutchison and D. Darnell follow with an analysis of "Families of Handicapped Children," noting structural adaptations. B. Halderman discusses "Social Learning Theory" as it applies to development and maintenance of antisocial, coercive, or aggressive behavior patterns in the family. The concluding three papers address specific problems concerning divorce and single-parent families (G. Nunn), the stepfamily (B. Kopper-Roland), and foster and adoptive families (B. Halderman). (CL)

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PROJECT PARALLEL:
HOME/SCHOOL INTERVENTION MODEL
FOR BEHAVIORALLY DISORDERED STUDENTS

Family Awareness Training Materials

Project
Iowa

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PROJECT PARALLEL:
HOME/SCHOOL INTERVENTION MODEL FOR BEHAVIORALLY DISORDERED STUDENTS

Family Awareness Training Materials

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Darlene Darnell
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Area Education Agency 6
Marshalltown, Iowa

A publication of

Project Iowa

A MODEL PRACTICES AWARD GRANT
THROUGH PROJECT IOWA:
IMPROVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES
TO BEHAVIORALLY DISORDERED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1984

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IOWA MONOGRAPH SERIES

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Iowa Study: Preliminary Report: Reintegration of Emotionally Disabled Pupils, Carl R. Smith, Maureen White, and Reece Peterson, 1979.

Strategies for Planning and Facilitating the Reintegration of Students with Behavioral Disorders, Maureen White, 1980.

On Reading and Writing, Clay Starlin, 1982.

Current Issues in Behavioral Disorders - 1982, Carl R. Smith and Barbara J. Wilcots, 1982.

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Social/Affective Interventions in Behavioral Disorders, Judith K. Grosenick, Sharon L. Huntze, Ellen McGinnis, and Carl R. Smith, 1984.

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FAMILY AWARENESS

developed by:

Darlene Darnell
Project Parallel

Area Education Agency 6
Marshalltown, Iowa

1984

FAMILY AWARENESS

Individual to Family

Traditionally in both medical and educational institutions, the student, patient or individual is viewed as a sole entity. Individual evolution continues, but it is frequently useful to regard an individual as a member of a larger system -- the family. Lewis (1979) asserts that "Part of the difficulty in shifting our view from the individual to the family as a whole is that we are accustomed to examining and trying to understand behavior only in terms of the individual" (p. 41). Numerous descriptions of individual behavior exist (e.g., shy, aggressive, insecure, etc.), but few words characterize interactions between people.

Satir (1972), one of the pioneers in family and interpersonal relationships, describes the family as an "iceberg." She suggests that people are aware of only one-tenth of what is actually occurring within a family at a given time. With this complexity, one might pose the question, "How can a comprehensive understanding of the family system occur?" Just as developments in the field of individual growth continue, new knowledge is constantly compiled in the area of family awareness. This chapter presents an overview of this information and its applications in an educational setting.

Systems Approach

Murray Bowen was one of the first theorists to relate general systems theory to the study of families. Observation and diagnosis was expanded from the individual and the mother-child dyad to focusing on the involvement of all family members, including multiple generations.

In this framework, the family is seen as a system of individual members who do not function independently of one another. Because of this interdependency, change in one part of the system directly or indirectly involves all parts. Thus, if a child's behavior significantly changes, there is an impact on the entire family system.

The system consistently attempts to maintain itself in a homeostatic state. This balance does not remain steady, however, but is dynamic and constantly changing. Some adjustment is always made to ensure that the structure of the system is not altered significantly, but enables the balance to change within limits (Anderson & Carter, 1974).

This balance may be maintained in a healthy or dysfunctional fashion, but all families seek alternatives to reduce tension. Almost any behavior that maintains homeostatis in the family is tolerated. Destructive or dysfunctional behaviors are preferred over those that produce disorder in the system (Walsh, 1980).

In a healthy unit, the reaction to one member's job loss may be for the family to unite, make joint sacrifices, develop an alternative budget, and for another member to enter the work force. Dysfunctional adaptation might involve marital conflict, depression in one spouse, or behavior problems with a child. These situations all serve to diffuse the tension around the job loss and focus it on other areas, thus maintaining a sense of balance.

Family systems maintain boundaries which regulate interactions with others outside the family. Kantor and Lehr (1975) refer to three major types of family systems: open, closed and random.

Open family systems are characterized by permeable boundaries allowing support and participation by individuals outside the family, and freedom for family members to interact with outsiders. Closeness among family members is encouraged, but temporary distancing is permitted to relieve discomfort resulting from too much closeness. Family goals are subject to change or negotiations and experimentation is encouraged. The open family allows flexibility and adaptability among members and routines. Educationally, members of this system are open to suggestions and willing to be involved with academic programming for their child. Although their child's education may be a priority in the family's life at one point in time, one cannot predict a steady committment due to the freedom for adaptability in goals. Change, however, is openly invited and the educator would probably find members of this family type cooperative.

Closed family systems are frequently fearful and resistant to involving people outside the family. A family member, usually one or both parents, is identified as the authority and all rules are governed by the person or persons in that position. The family relies solely on its own members for support and friendships. The entire family is subject to one orientation and demonstrates a strict set of disciplinary measures. A constant energy level is maintained and any deviations from time schedules are viewed as disruptive. Due to the rigidity of this system, change is deemed negative. Since this system relies primarily on its own resources, this type of family is frequently labeled "resistant" by educators. The closed family may view a special education program as a deviation from past norms, and reject it as a programming alternative. Rigid ideas of the child's ability and performance remain and may not be consistent with results of educational evaluations. It is difficult but essential for school personnel to develop a positive, trusting relationship with these parents. Once accomplished, this family could be expected to keep appointments, be on time, and invest a steady level of energy into tasks they commit to doing.

The **random**-type family is characterized by spontaneous, unpredictable actions. There is little structure or regularity of time and resources. Organization and planning are not viewed as important. Due to the individual mobilization of energy in the family, many crises result. These may not be viewed as serious, but just as day-to-day disruptions. Parents could easily be identified as not interested in their child's education. Irregular attendance at staffings and parent-teacher conferences may be observed. Children might frequently be tardy for school and display poor organizational skills. Children could easily experience difficulty adjusting to a defined structure and routine in the school day.

The terms open, closed and random are relative, however, and families may display characteristics from one or all of these systems. When considering educational programming for a student, it is useful to evaluate outstanding features of the family system to more completely understand the student's environment.

Family Structure

It is essential to look closely at the components of the family system to thoroughly understand its complexity. Initially, two individuals desiring a close relationship form a couple and comprise the family unit. The family system becomes more involved when a child is born and there is a shift to a new set of transactions between three individuals.

Minuchin (1974) believes that an individual's behavior can be significantly changed by altering the family structure. Since it is impossible for all family members to attend to all tasks in maintaining the family structure, there must be a division of labor in the system. Minuchin (1974) describes this task division in terms of subsystems.

The first subsystem is formed when the couple attempts to develop ways to mutually satisfy each other's needs and provide support. This accommodation is necessary in the development of reciprocal interactions and an effectively functioning subsystem. It can be referred to as the spouse subsystem where all marital transactions occur.

The second subsystem is the parental subsystem, formed when a child enters the family. The major task becomes one of socializing the child. Nurturance, control, guidance and authority aspects are also predominant in this subsystem. Although the father and mother usually assume parental roles, an older child or grandparents may also be a member in this system. When the mother or father is not actively involved in the parenting, another family member often assumes these responsibilities.

The sibling subsystem comprises the final family component. This may include one child or several, depending on family size. This is the first situation children have to experiment with peer relationships. It also prevents adult interference and provides an opportunity for sharing, competition and cooperation. Sibling subsystems are just as important to family development as the parental and spouse subsystems.

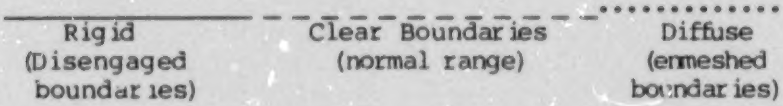
Individuals can move in and out of subsystems depending on the task at hand, and still maintain a healthy system. Dysfunctional families often present rigid, distorted subsystem arrangements that do not allow this flexibility.

Boundaries are maintained between each subsystem and define who participates in it and how they participate. Minuchin (1974) presents three major types of boundaries that differentiate subsystems in a continuum from rigid to diffuse (Figure 1). Rigid (disengaged) boundaries allow little or no communication, mutual support, sharing or interdependence between subsystems. Diffuse (enmeshed) boundaries are characterized by overinvolved, protective and overdependent interactions. Few clear lines of authority and responsibility exist between the parents and children. When one member is experiencing a problem or tension is evident, it affects the total family.

Clear boundaries exist in healthy families when a degree of problem solving ability is evident. There is open communication among family members and clear lines of authority between parent and child. Decision making can be accomplished by the parents without interference from the children, while allowing the children to have a voice and share in some family decisions. Responsibilities are clearly designated and flexibility exists to allow input from one subsystem to another.

The type of boundary alone does not necessarily imply functional or dysfunctional family processes. Most families have rigid or diffuse boundaries at sometime in their development, (e.g., the mother-child subsystem often becomes slightly enmeshed following childbirth while the wife-husband relationship appears slightly disengaged). One needs to beware however, when extremes of boundary adaptations are intact for long periods of time or remain inflexible.

Figure 1



Healthy Families

The family as an institution has been written about since ancient times. The structure has evolved as well as individual members' roles, but the purpose seems to remain somewhat constant. Frequently, the focus of family literature centers on dysfunctional aspects. Rarely are family strengths and weaknesses viewed while focusing on healthy family functioning. Before considering dysfunctions in the family unit, it is useful to look at aspects contributing to a healthy family in order to have a basis for comparison.

As in the past, families continue to be the agent for raising children, preparing members for new roles in life, and providing new experiences. Satir (1972) says that the purpose of the family is to grow new people and further the growth of those already there. Healthy families demonstrate respect and support between parents and are able to adapt and shift roles more easily. Unhealthy families typically deny internal problems and an individual member's problems are seen separately from the family.

Lewis (1979) identifies two primary functions of the family beyond the role of physical survival: 1) preserving the sanity and encouraging the growth of the parents and 2) producing healthy children who grow toward separateness, individuality and autonomy from the family. Emotional support, protection and intimacy are additional family functions. Lewis (1979) cites the nature of the marriage as the most important factor in making and maintaining a healthy family. When this relationship is warm, caring and mutually supportive, there is less likelihood for one of the adults to develop a mental illness. Lewis expands on the concept of healthy families and notes additional factors to be considered:

1) How the family deals with power
2) Family closeness
3) Manner in which the family talks together
4) Problem-solving ability
5) Reactions to feelings and how feelings are dealt with
6) Ability to handle change and loss
7) Values
8) Intimacy and autonomy

Clear and open communication between spouses and among family members seems to be a central issue in healthy family functioning. Within healthy families, members speak directly to one another. Responsibility, as well as individuality, intimacy and autonomy, is encouraged. Children raised in families who communicate unclearly demonstrate low levels of responsibility, are impermeable, invade frequently, and usually experience difficulty with autonomy.

A clear hierarchy of power with leadership securely in the parents' hands is predominant in a healthy family unit (Lewis, 1979; Beavers, 1982). This leadership is characterized by non-authoritative parenting, however. Children's opinions and feelings are valued and parents seek to involve them in appropriate problem-solving processes. Beavers (1982) notes that parents have relatively equal, overt power and maintain complimentary roles to avoid competition. Not all household and child-care responsibilities are shared, but these are delineated. There also tends to be little sexual stereotyping in these families and an openness to other viewpoints and lifestyles prevails.

Beavers (1982) and Lewis (1979) recognize the importance of flexibility in healthy families. The family's ability to accept change appears to be a central component in optimal family functioning. This skill is essential due to the inevitable, natural changes that occur over time in the family. All changes seem to center around two events: children growing up and parents aging. Adults and families continue to evolve throughout their lives, and are not predestined by events occurring from birth to six years of age or the formative years (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980).

The family in this context can be viewed from the first stage of the newly established couple to the final stage of launching when the children leave home. Other adaptations of this model may include stages such as: the unattached young adult, the aging adult, later family years, the empty nest, etc., depending on the specific perspective or current orientation.

This model addresses family development only in a two-parent biological family. Additional adaptations occur when viewing a single-parent family, stepfamily or other special units.

The initial stage of the newly established couple may be one of the most difficult and complex transitions of the family life cycle. Weddings are frequently viewed as the solution to all problems. Unlike other stages of the life cycle, marriage is the sole relationship entered by choice. One of the primary tasks negotiated during this stage is separating from the family of origin. Haley (1973) emphasizes that only humans carry their whole family into the bargain. Many think marriage is the only way to separate from the family, but later find that marriage alone does not successfully create this separation. Additionally, many negotiations occur at this stage, including use of time, energy, money, space and friendships.

Upon entering the second stage, families with young children, the environment must be adapted to accommodate space for a new individual. Unlike other organizations, families incorporate new members only by birth and adoption. Children enter a particular family without choice. Although couples have a period of courtship in preparation for marriage, there is virtually no preparation for having a baby. The natural mother-infant bonding that develops may present a problem to the couple if the husband is excluded from this relationship. The couple must learn how to share parenting responsibilities while maintaining the growth of their own relationship. With the addition of one child, potential interactions increase by 300 percent, which greatly multiples possibilities for conflict and stress. Extended family relationships also enter into this stage as parents now become grandparents. The extended family may be a critical resource for the new parents or a point of conflict if competition occurs on child-rearing issues.

The major source of socialization has been the family unit up to this point. When a child reaches school age, the system must expand to incorporate community and educational involvement. This is frequently frightening to parents as some of their control begins to diminish. Parents may perceive the school and educational personnel as having more influence over their children than they have. Parents must also deal with the child who is beginning to focus on peers, develops new friendships, and is adjusting to a new role of pupil.

The fact cannot be ignored that school entry is a unique, distinct, stress-producing event for mothers and fathers. Educators must be aware of the anxiety and sadness this event produces in the lives of parents. When a parent has little confidence that schooling will be a quality experience for the child, these emotions are intensified. Although the father is often portrayed as indifferent or uninterested in the child entering school, the anxiety and sadness is distinctly evident regardless of the degree of closeness between father and child. Sensitivity and support by school personnel at this stage may improve the parents', especially the father's, participation in their child's education (Hock, McKenry, Hock, Triolo, & Stewart, 1980.)

Adolescence presents a new crisis for many families. Family boundaries need to remain flexible to allow for the child's increasing independence. Ackerman (1980) contends that "Of all the natural events which occur in the family life cycle, the emergence of adolescence is the one most likely to test the flexibility of the organization" (p. 150). The teenager frequently moves from a position of wanting to make all decisions to a former role of seeking care and protection from parents. The adolescent is exploring with a new peer group and is actively involved with the community. This frequently results in new ideas being brought back to the family and experimentation with new behaviors and values (Ackerman, 1980). Family rules are challenged which often results in a control issue. This stage becomes the final preparation for the individual to learn self-sufficient skills necessary for adulthood.

The final stage to be addressed involves launching where the child exists separately from the family system. The children move toward development of an adult to adult relationship with their parents. Upon the departure of the last child, the marital system becomes a dyad once more which requires a renegotiation of many issues.

When viewing the family life cycle, one must recognize that the family may remain in more than one stage at one time (e.g., children may range in age over several stages). Entering or completing a developmental stage in addition to spanning several stages may increase family stress.

In addition to normative stressors experienced throughout the family life cycle, it is imperative to consider the impact of unexpected events (e.g., health problems, divorce, loss of a job, death, birth of a handicapped child, etc.) on the family system. These factors not only affect the family, but may have significant implications on a child's school performance and behavior. All of these events involve a loss experience. Bebensee (1981) and Moses (1983) suggest that children's responses to these and other losses involve anger, grief, denial, anxiety, depression and fear. Bebensee (1981) contends that these feelings may be exhibited through physical aches and pains, fantasies, destructive behaviors and regression, among others. Moses (1983) encourages educators to approach students with an openness and willingness to listen to their concerns. He states, "It is the loss that hurts; talking about it helps."

The consideration of these implications is critical in the field of education. To thoroughly understand a child's behavior and school performance, one must consider the student's family environment. When faced with the prospect of changing a child's behavior in the classroom or programming for academic goals on the student's Individual Education Program, it is essential to actively involve parents and obtain a comprehensive view of the child's total environment.

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FAMILIES OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

developed by:

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Project Parallel

Area Education Agency 6
Marshalltown, Iowa

1984

FAMILIES OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

The impact a handicapped child has on a family is often researched in the study of stress. Stress has long been a subject of interest to researchers from various fields. Although many definitions have been proposed, three definitions of stress/stressors are most often cited: a) Holmes and Rahe (1967) define a social stressor as a set of circumstances that require change in the individual's ongoing life pattern; b) Hill (1958) views a stressor as a crisis-provoking event or situation for which the family has little or no preparation; and c) Rabkin and Struening (1976) define social stressors as personal life changes altering the individual's social setting; they refer to stress as the immediate and delayed patterns of physiological and psychological responses to the stressor.

As a population group, families of handicapped children become an obvious target for research since most authors agree that the presence of a handicapped child is a family stressor. This chapter does not argue for the presence or absence of additional stress in families of handicapped children, nor is it critical of the research studies conducted to date. However, it is important to comment on various concepts associated with this research and the resulting implications for professionals.

In a review of more than 50 articles on families with handicapped children, Murphy (1982) found only 16 to be controlled analytical studies. Only half of those 16 studies included a control group of healthy children. Murphy concludes:

> Although many family stress studies have merit, none offer constructs which suggest solutions or ways to alleviate problems inherent in raising a handicapped child.... Most research has been concerned with the very retarded or those with severe fixed defects, and many groups of children with less debilitating conditions have been neglected.... Few authors have addressed the issue of the child with a mild or marginal handicap.... Most researchers have dwelled on the problems and deficits instead of the strengths of the families who have adjusted and, therefore, provided the affected child with an environment which allows him to reach his optimal potential.... (p. 81).

Wikler, Wasow and Hatfield (1981), contend that there are two incompatible notions in the literature regarding the adjustment process of parents of retarded children; grief is time-bound and sorrow is chronic. The notion that grief is time-bound and that parents progress through predictable stages of adjustment is the most prevalent view. The stages of grief supported by most clinical studies are shock, despair, guilt, withdrawal, acceptance and adjustment.

The less prevalent view is that parents of mentally retarded children experience chronic sorrow. Although most agree that parents go through a grieving phase immediately after the diagnosis, supporters of the chronic sorrow notion maintain that the intense grieving process is reactivated and experienced by these parents many times.

Wikler, et al. (1981), indicate the significance of determining which of the two adjustment patterns best describes the retarded child's parents' experiences. The implications for services are critical. If, as a professional, you believed that parents of retarded children move through progressive stages toward a complete adjustment, according to Wikler, et al. (1981), you would:

> a) facilitate the parents working through these stages, b) discontinue services at the conclusion of the adjustment process, and c) identify those parents who did not go through these stages as dysfunctional.... (p. 64).

If, on the other hand, you believed that parents of mentally retarded children experience chronic sorrow and that the intense grieving process will be reactivated on numerous occasions, you would offer a continuum of appropriate support services throughout their child's life.

In support of this latter view, Wikler (1981) hypothesizes that there are 10 critical potentially stressful periods for families of mentally retarded children. Wikler cites several authors who believe that the loss of the fantasized normal child causes the parents' grief at the diagnosis of mental retardation in their child. Wikler contends that although parents will regain their sense of equilibrium, the initial adjustment to that disappointment may be temporary. The loss of the fantasized normal child is restimulated at various points in time. Wikler asserts that a crisis may occur whenever a discrepancy exist between what parents expect of a child's development and what actually takes place. Parents of mentally retarded children attempt to cope by living day to day, which can inhibit their ability to anticipate potential crises. If, as Wikler hypothesizes, there are predictable periods when grieving will be reactivated, parents could anticipate and be better prepared to deal with their emotional responses at those times.

This hypothesis identifies 10 critical periods, five of which are defined by the chronological age of the child and are related to normal child development. The remaining five periods are distinctive events only experienced by families of mentally retarded children. The five developmental crises in normal child development are:

> a) the child should have begun to walk (ages 12-15 months), b) the child should have begun to talk (24-30 months), c) the child should be starting kindergarten in public school (the child is publicly labeled as "different" and belonging in "specialclasses"), d) the onset of puberty (tension between physical appearance vs. mental-social ability), and e) the 21st birthday (symbolic of independence from the family).... (p. 286).

The remaining five periods hold the greatest discrepancy between what was expected of parenting and what actually happened. They include:

> a) diagnosis of mental retardation, b) younger sibling with lower CA has MA matching and then higher than retarded sibling, c) serious discussion of placement of retarded child outside the home (or placement itself), d) exacerbated behavior, seizure or health problems unique to retarded child,and e) serious discussion about guardianship and care for the retarded child (p. 285).

Wikler adds that this second set of crises are transitions away from traditional parenting responsibilities and shift decision-making responsibilities from the family to professionals. The stigma attached to negotiating with the social service delivery system contributes to the stress of these transitional crises. The fact that parents are reminded at each point that this process would be unnecessary had their child been normal only serves to re-evoke their disappointment.

This author's search for pertinent research results supports Murphy's (1982) conclusions. That is, very retarded children or those with severe fixed defects have been the targets of most research, while children with mild or marginal handicaps have largely been neglected. The literature suggests that the severity of the child's handicap may not be crucial to the family's adjustment. If investigators have not confronted the effects of the mildly/moderately handicapped child on his or her family, then comparisons of handicapped children may be misleading.

There are several points educational personnel should consider in attempting to understand the needs of behaviorally disordered/emotionally disturbed children and their families. According to Wood (1982), parents of emotionally disturbed children do not seem to find participation in advocacy groups as rewarding as do parents of other groups of handicapped children. There is no support organization for parents of emotionally disturbed children similar to the Association for Retarded Citizens or the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. Wood states, "The aversive quality of the label 'emotionally disturbed' may inhibit the parents from organizing around it" (p. 130). Unfortunately, parents who are "out of touch" with advocacy or support groups often operate from a base of misinformation about their child's disability. Solutions to their problems are generally sought as individual families rather than as members of a group. According to Honig (1980), other parents are one of the most effective ways to encourage parents to become more involved in the development and education of their handicapped child. Marion (1980) notes that when parents are approached by school personnel with an inference of blame, they become defensive and angry. But when approached with sensitivity and concern, they are eager for information. Wood (1982) adds, "The family and the school are two agencies that cannot refuse to accept responsibility for students assigned to them for care" (p. 131). Wood further suggests that rather than demanding assistance from parents in changing their child's in-school behavior, school personnel should assume that parents are willing to help if able and supported. Parents' understanding and skills in managing their children are expected to be less than those of trained professionals. Although it is not the educator's responsibility to help parents solve all their problems, school personnel do need to recognize factors influencing the parent's ability to adjust to their child's emotional/behavioral disorder. If these factors are not dealt with effectively, cooperative home/school efforts will not succeed.

Resistance is too frequently used to describe a missed appointment, denial of a problem, disinterest, poor motivation, uncooperativeness, etc. Anger expressed from professionals may only lead to increased potential anxiety, which in turn may impede the child's progress. The anxieties and worries these parents experience following the identification of a behavior disorder for their child need to be met with understanding, not pressure, from school personnel.

Although it is not always a crisis, adjusting to the fact that their child does not fit into a regular education program is not an easy task for parents and can't always be worked through quickly. For these parents, focus on stimulating a feeling of responsibility instead of guilt. Working with professionals to develop an appropriate educational plan may lessen anxieties in a healthy family unit. Parents can then have access to information regarding their child's handicapping condition, developmental levels and programming options. Time-consuming as it may be, frequent and consistent home/school meetings are critical to special education programming for behaviorally disordered students.

Family Structural Adaptations

According to Haley (1976), "Most families with a child problem have one parent 'overinvolved' with the child..." (p. 78). Although the father is most frequently viewed as uninvolved (Berg & Rosenblum, 1977; Tiesmann, 1980), families may be found in which this situation is reversed and the child care is left entirely to the father. Tavormina and associates identified four major styles of parental adaptation to the reality of having a handicapped child. The first style involves a parent being "emotionally divorced" from the child while the other parent becomes the sole caregiver.

When considering intervention techniques with this family adaptation, it is important to focus on the entire family unit rather than further intensifying the overinvolved parent-child dyad. One can use the less-involved parent to disengage the bond between the overinvolved parent and child (Hayley, 1976). In an educational setting the overinvolved parent may appear very cooperative and make frequent contacts with teachers regarding the child's performance. The peripheral parent is likely to be more distant and could easily be labeled "resistant." The primary caregiver should be encouraged to develop individual outside interests. Child care could be arranged if necessary to allow this parent time without feeling guilty for leaving their child. The less-involved parent's participation should be encouraged by making direct contact with him or her and emphasizing their importance in the family and child's education. Staffings and meetings should be scheduled during evening or off-work hours to facilitate his involvement. It may also be useful to designate specific activities the parent and child could do together. While strengthening the parent-child relationship it would also be important to encourage the parents to spend time together and strengthen their own relationship. The overinvolved parent may have used school personnel, friends or other individual for support due to conflict in the spouse relationship. Mutual support between spouses should be facilitated.

In the second style of adaptation the parents join together in rejecting the handicapped child. Parents may also avoid addressing the issue of the handicap or deny its existence. The child is at risk for out-of-home placement regardless of the type of severity of the handicap. Beckman-Bell (1981) suggests that caregiving demands are increased and that frequently these children are difficult to comfort. This places them at a higher risk for abuse. Parental rejection may result when expectations for a reciprocal parent-child relationship are not met.

When parents have already chosen to reject their child or deny the existence of a handicapping condition, they are likely to resist services or not identify the problem as a family concern. It is essential that these parents not be approached by school personnel or other professionals in a blaming manner. Marion (1980) asserts that when school personnel speak to parents with an inference of blame, the parents become defensive and angry, but when approached with sensitivity and concern, they are more eager for information. Developing a positive home-school relationship with these parents is critical to the success of the child's educational program. Initial family involvement should be at a non-threatening level, such as holding a parent-teacher conference to explain the school program and to encourage the parents to observe their child in a classroom setting. Parents could then be encouraged to participate in positive activities with their child at their own pace. Although parent education and family counseling could be offered, the parents may refuse those services until a trusting relationship has been established. It remains important for school personnel to observe the child and report any suspected abuse.

A third style involves the handicapped child in the center of all family interactions. All needs of the handicapped child take priority over individual and family needs and desires. The child soon learns to take advantage of the situation, resulting in parents and other family members feeling guilty if total focus is not directed toward this child. This family is often identified as a "handicapped, child-centered" family. Non-handicapped siblings are frequently left out, feel resentful, and maintain little access to parental time and energy. School personnel will find these parents extremely cooperative and willing to follow any suggestions provided. Parents may attempt to provide the handicapped child with excellent health care, couseling, or whatever they feel is needed. The child may not display behavior problems at home, since he or she is probably given few responsibilities and not required to follow typical household rules.

When intervening with this type of family, one must take care not to reinforce the handicapped child remaining at the center of the family system. It is important to consider the effects on the entire family unit, not solely the child. Haley (1976) suggests that this intense double bonding frequently exists with severely disturbed young people and that simple intervention procedures cannot be implemented. Parents should be encouraged to spend time together as a couple and engage in activities with their other children, but they may be reluctant to reduce their involvement with the handicapped child. It is important for the handicapped child to be at the same level as the other siblings. Since this child has previously maintained the primary focus, he or she will not easily give up this position of power. Rules and responsibilities should be assigned to the handicapped child consistent with his or her ability. A school counselor or other support personnel may be requested to help siblings deal with their feelings of anger and resentment.

The final adaptation style is one in which the parents mutually support one another, the handicapped child and their other children. A high level of intimacy is achieved while maintaining individuality, autonomy and a sense of balance in the family. The mother and father remain in a position of authority, with clear and open communication existing between the children and parents.

When a family makes a healthy adjustment to having a handicapped child, it is allowed to maintain its present structure. Services should not be mandatory when a family is coping effectively. Family members should be supported, however, in keeping their handicapped child's needs in perspective to family needs. One must not assume that the same behaviors or problems exhibited by a child in the school environment are displayed at home. Patterson (1982) reviewed studies where children were referred for conduct problems in the classroom. These studies reported a range of 50 to 80 percent of cases in which the students did not show deviant behavior at home.

Although a family may be functioning effectively at one stage of the life cycle, Marion (1981) suggests that crisis periods exist in the life of a family which precipitates changing parent and family needs. Adolescence, for example, may be a crisis-producing event that requires short-term intervention. School personnel need to maintain a positive relationship with families and direct them to appropriate resources when services are needed or requested.

The final stage obviously appears the most adaptive, but no single adaptation pattern is best for all families. Families do not always fit neatly into one of these four patterns. One is likely to encounter various characteristics of the adaptation styles in one family at times throughout its life cycle. Healthy families can move in and out of all these structural configurations at times during their development. These patterns become dysfunctional, however, when they remain in a rigid formation for an extended period. When assessing a family or designing intervention strategies, these patterns should be used as guidelines for services, not as absolute recommendations. An Individual Education Program is developed for each student due to individual needs. Similarly, each family has unique circumstances and needs which must be considered in assessment and intervention.

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SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

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SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Social learning theory, as it is known today, has its antecedents in the works of early social learning theorists (Miller & Dolard, 1941; Sears, Maccoby & Levin, 1957), operant conditioning (Holland & Skinner, 1961), social learning and personality development (Bandura & Walters, 1963), and behavior analysis (Bijou & Baer, 1967).

Cairns (1979) defined the three current areas of interest in social learning theory as interactional analysis (Bell & Harper, 1977; Patterson, 1982), social-cognitive reinterpretation (Aronfreed, 1968; Mischel, 1968), and social-environmental structure (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Parke, 1970). Social learning theorists differ in the degree to which they will entertain cognitive mediating variables such as expectancy, attribution and transformations. However, they all acknowledge the utility of reinforcement theory, believe functional and dysfunctional behaviors are primarily a result of learning, and stress the reciprocal nature of interactions. Current social learning theorists also accept individual differences as a determining variable in the acquisition and performance of behavior. Consequently, identification of antecedents and consequences is considered necessary but not sufficient for the prediction of individual behavior.

It is impossible within the scope of this chapter to write a "how to" manual on the application of social learning theory. Instead, this chapter presents a social learning perspective on how antisocial, coercive or aggressive behavior patterns are developed and maintained in the family. Key concepts covered in this chapter include: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment and stimulus control. These concepts add dimensions to the understanding of family patterns in ways unique to the social learning perspective. Issues on the timing and intensity of reinforcement and punishment as well as the different schedules of reinforcement have been omitted. A theoretical exploration of how and why reinforcers and punishers work has also been excluded. Readers interested in pursuing these topics are referred to Bandura (1969, 1971), Craighead, Kazdin and Mahoney (1981), and/or MacMillan (1973). Occasionally, the reader will encounter underlined quotes. These quotes were taken from Craighead et. al. (1981) for accuracy of definition.

At a general level, "the principal of reinforcement always refers to an increase in the frequency of a response when it is followed by a contingent stimulus or event" (p. 116), while "the principle of punishment always refers to a decrease in the frequency of a response when it is followed by a contingent stimulus or event" (p. 116).

The principle of reinforcement covers both positive and negative reinforcement. "Positive reinforcement refers to an increase in the frequency of a response that is followed by a positive reinforcer " (p. 117). (Operationally, any event that follows a response and increases the probability of that response is considered a positive reinforcer.) At first blush, scolding may appear to be an aversive event. If the behavior, however, increases in frequency following the scolding, then scolding (in that particular situation) is actually a positive reinforcer. This brings up a point of potential confusion regarding positive reinforcement. Some people think positive reinforcement is a technique that is only applied to desirable behaviors. However, we often unwittingly positively reinforce undesirable behaviors more than we intentionally positively reinforce desirable behaviors. For example, Walker and Buckley (1973) found 77 percent of one teacher's attention was paired with deviant classroom behavior. Although this may represent an extreme example, it serves to illustrate that positive reinforcement for undesirable behaviors can occur, and at very high rates. The concept of positive reinforcement for undesirable behavior is very useful for explanatory or diagnostic purposes while positive reinforcement for desirable behavior is a central component in most intervention strategies.

"Negative reinforcement refers to an increase in the frequency of a response following the removal of a negative reinforcer (aversive event or stimulus) immediately after the response occurs" (p. 120). (Operationally, an event is considered a negative reinforcer if its removal following a response increases the frequency of that response.) Meeting an attack with a successful counterattack is a prime example of negative reinforcement and one that occurs with surprising frequency in preschool and elementary school-aged milieus (Patterson, 1982). Naturalistic and laboratory investigators have consistently demonstrated the potency of negative reinforcement in shaping and maintaining behavior. Aggressive and coercive behaviors are highly responsive to the effects of negative reinforcement. Patterson (1982), for example, cited research in which aggressive responses were established at significant levels in preschool-aged children with only four negative reinforcement trials. Comparable forms of aggression in preschool-aged children required up to 120 positive reinforcement trials!

Before proceeding any further in the discussion of negative reinforcement, several points need to be made about punishment. By definition, all punishments are aversive events. All aversive events, however, are not punishments. This is an important distinction. Just as a "reinforcer is as a reinforcer does," a "punishment is as a punishment does." If the contingent application of an aversive event fails to reduce the future frequency of a target response, then the aversive event is not a punishment but, rather, just an aversive event. According to Patterson (1982), "the optimum condition for eliciting an aggressive reaction is simply to do something aversive to the other person" (p. 150). In both clinical and normal families, Patterson (1982) found roughly 30 percent of the target child's coercive behaviors were the result of an aversive antecedent from a family member. Among clinical target children, however, the coercive responses tended to be of longer durations and result in escalations of coercive interchanges. When someone says "I've tried punishment and it doesn't work," what that person is really saying is that he or she has done a lot of aversive or coercive things to another person. The upshot of this scenerio is that the "other person" has probably been successful in terminating the aversive events with aggressive reactions such that the aggressive reactions have been negatively reinforced. The situation is stated well by Patterson (1982):

> As a general case, the writer assumes that parents of antisocial children seldom follow through on their threats or scolding... The child is aware of this and responds to most aversive consequences with counterattacks. From his standpoint, insults, humiliations, and scolding are all aversives; few of them signal that punishment will follow. They are responded to not as signals for him to 'stop' but rather as irritants and elicitors of counterattack (p. 112).

Again, Patterson (1982) is quoted because of his ability to succinctly make an important point:

> The mother who threatens but seldom follows through... will be less effective in using her threats and warnings to control deviant child behavior. This arrangement produces the parent who natters. They express their annoyance by threats and scolding, which serve only to elicit counterattacks. It may be that these natterers simply do not know what to use as a nonviolent back-up... They periodically respond with physical assault; but the favorite back-up for parents of antisocial children seems to be 'grounding the child', e.g., for a month. When this occurs, the parent and the child know that the parent does not really mean it. Within two days of being grounded (staying at home) the child can slip away; and when he or she does, the parents simply natter. The infrequent assaults and groundings produce some brief respite, but things quickly return to 'normal'. As a result, the parents report that, in the long run, nothing works (p. 118).

Again, the critical aspect of "nattering" goes beyond the inability of the parent to decrease the child's undesirable behavior(s). The parent is training the child in the skillful art of counterattack, coercion or aggression if these counterattacks successfully terminate parental nattering (i.e., negative reinforcement). Naturalistic observations have shown that parents of antisocial children provide more aversive consequences than parents of "normal" children (Patterson, 1982). In light of the earlier distinction made between punishment and aversive events, this finding is not too surprising. It is not that parents of antisocial children do not try to control their childrens' behaviors but, rather, are ineffective in their methods. In such families, attempts to control children's undesirable behaviors frequently result in a series of coercive interchanges that leave the problematic behavior fairly much intact. This may also increase the probability of oppositional behavior in the future.

This is not to suggest that all children with behavior problems are the victims of "inept" parenting. Some children are simply easier to manage, discipline and raise. Thomas, Chess and Birch (1968) discovered three broad behavioral styles that are identifiable in infancy and relatively stable over time. Of most relevance here is the "difficult child" cluster which includes such characteristics as: arrhythmic, withdrawing, nonadaptable, intense and negative. Children identified as fitting the "difficult child" cluster in infancy were at more risk of being labeled emotionally disturbed, antisocial or behaviorally disordered at later ages. Patterson (1982) also reviewed evidence that suggests some people, by nature, are hyporesponsive to aversive stimuli. It is hypothesized that differential physiologic responsiveness to punishment affects the extent to which an individual is susceptible to punishment. Rather than assume that all parents with behaviorally disordered students are "inept" at parenting, one should evaluate the demands placed on the parents by the child's own characteristics. "Normal" parenting skills may not be sufficient with some children.

As stated at the outset, social learning theorists believe interactions between people are reciprocal. In the laboratory, a high degree of structure exists regarding who does what to whom when. Under "real life" circumstances these conditions are never met. Consequently, naturalistic observations of families have provided a great deal of understanding as to how people mutually affect each other during the course of an interaction. It is highly doubtful that the participants in most interactions are fully aware of how their behavior is determined by and determines the behavior of the other person. The following scene, for example, is admittedly a bit contrived for the purpose of illustration, but is not improbable. The situation begins with father walking into the living room and scolding the child for not picking up the toys. The child begins to whine and cry. After a few moments of continued scolding, the father realizes scolding has only served to exacerbate the intensity of the crying and whining. At this point, the father switches tactics and holds the child on his lap while talking in a calm tone. The child, almost immediately, stops whining and crying and gives a grateful hug to the father. Together the father and child sit and watch television for a few minutes until dinner is ready. They then walk over and around the toys towards the kitchen with the father resolving in his own mind to have the child pick up the toys after dinner. In this interactional sequence, the operational conditions necessary to define punishment, negative reinforcement and positive reinforcement all occurred. The father was punished once, negatively reinforced once and positively reinforced twice. The child was negatively reinforced twice and positively reinforced twice. In addition to the numerous effects generated by the father's and child's behaviors, there are the short-term and long-term outcomes. While the father accomplished the short-term outcome of getting the child to stop crying and whining, the child achieved the long-term outcome of not having to pick up the toys. This also provides an example of the "reinforcement trap." Although the father would feel he was successful in getting the child to stop crying and whining, what he actually accomplished was to increase the probability of the child using crying and whining as a counterploy in the future. In essence, one can win the battle and lose the war without being aware of how it happened.

Discriminate stimuli signal the individual as to whether or not a particular response is likely to be reinforced. "When the individual responds differently in the presence of different stimuli, he or she has made a discrimination. When responses are differentially controlled by antecedent stimuli, behavior is considered to be under stimulus control" (p. 133). For example, few people pick up a telephone receiver and say hello unless the phone rings first. Similarly, few people can resist picking up the phone receiver and saying hello when the phone does ring. To carry the bell condition a bit further, the ringing of a telephone, doorbell and microwave timer signal different reinforcers for different responses. Social stimuli such as a frown or a smile as well as social contexts like the classroom versus the playground provide discriminative stimuli as to what responses (or class of response) have a high probability of being reinforced. A careful reading of a parent's mood may have a great deal of importance as to when a teenager may ask for the keys to the family car. Likewise, a parent's preoccupation with such activities as preparing a meal, talking on the telephone or bathing a sibling may serve as discriminate stimuli for a host of behaviors that would be curtailed under more immediate conditions of parental supervision or surveillance. Mischel and Mischel (1976) make several points about the prediction of behavior in particular situations. They stress not only the person's expectations about the consequences of different response possibilities, but also the subjective values of the different consequences that are expected. Although two students may both expect teacher praise for on-task behavior and teacher admonishment for off-task behavior, the student who subjectively values teacher acceptance most will probably demonstrate the highest rate of on-task behavior. While this may sound like a trivial point, it has considerable importance when evaluating student behavior. A pertinent evaluation consideration involves determining, in part, whether a student is off-task because he or she does not value teacher praise or because he or she receives little praise when he or she is on-task. Good and Brophy (1973) cite numerous studies where teachers diffentially praise and punish students for comparable behaviors. The simple act of having some observers track the negative behaviors of students while other observers track the positive behaviors of the same students significantly affects the rater's over-all rating of those students (Patterson, 1982). In essence, what we observe (or hear others have observed) determines, in part, what we expect. In turn, what we expect then serves to determine, in part, what we observe. The perpetuation of this circularity between expectation and selective observation of behavior underlies the frequent observation that people in distressed relationships respond more to the negative behaviors of the other person than they do to the positive behaviors. The opposite is true for people engaged in satisfying relationships. Once a negative bias is established in a relationship, concomitant and cyclic feelings of hopelessness, frustration and unwillingness to work at improving the relationship are common. Improving a distressed relationship appears to require a greater emphasis on positive interchanges than negative interchanges (Jacobson & Dallas, 1981). Empirical investigations (Jacobson, 1982) have shown that: a) decreasing the rate of negative relationship behaviors does not affect the rate of positive relationship behaviors, and b) relationship satisfaction is primarily a function of the frequency of positive events or interchanges in a relationship. According to Jacobson and Dallas (1981), intervention in distressed relationships should work on "primary tracking" or greater emphasis on the positive aspects of the relationship, and on "positive control" where positive reinforcement replaces punishment or negative reinforcement as a means of altering the other person's behavior. Once family members begin to feel and interact positively towards each other, training in communication and problem-solving skills is recommended to help the family cope more effectively with future problems (Jacobson & Margolin, 1979; Spivack, Platt & Shure, 1976).

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DIVORCE and
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Divorce in American Society: An Overview and Introduction

The traditional family unit is undergoing significant transformation in its role, structure and dynamics related to childrearing. The nuclear family which has, in the past, evoked a Rockwellian vision of mom, dad, kids and "love-ever-after" has been affected by a variety of social, economic, political and philosophical trends in the last 50 years(Bronfenbrenner, 1980; Guidubaldi, 1980; Hoffman, 1980, 1977; Kagan, 1980; Lamb & Bronson, 1980). Although few social scientists would say that these trends have destroyed the family, most would support the view that our conceptions of what constitutes the average American family are vastly different today than they were recently. Perhaps the most visible and certainly the most discussed manifestation of change in the family scene has been the sequelae of events termed "divorce." As Guidubaldi (1980) has noted:

> We are beginning to recognize the impact of pervasive family disruption on a wide range of children's school behaviors. We are becoming uncomfortably aware that the increasing divorce rate isn't just a passing fad or a temporary artifact of the World War II baby boom. Most importantly, we are beginning to understand that the growing lack of commitment to child-rearing may be one of the most significant societal changes in our lifetimes (pp. 378-79).

Divorce has become a pervasive aspect of matrimonial life in America. The United States has the highest divorce rate in the world (Carter & Glick, 1976; Norton & Glick, 1979). The dramatic increase of divorce witnessed its origins in the early 1960s and, although the rate of its increase has declined, it continues to escalate (Kitson & Raschke, 1981). Current census data project that 48 percent of marriages in 1980 will result in dissolution through divorce (Norton & Glick, 1979). Literally millions of parents and their children (not to mention relatives, friends and local communities) are affected in some manner by this societal phenomenon. Some often quoted statistics illustrate the extent of divorce in American society:

1) Approximately 1 million divorces occur each year involving over 3 million parents and children (Pfeffer, 1981).

2) In the last 50 years, the number of children in single-parent families has increased 700 percent (Horn, 1975). Current predictions indicate that by 1990, 33 percent of our nation's school-age children (i.e. from ages 6-18 years) will reside, during any given year, in a single-parent family due to divorce (Glick, 1979).

3) Today there are approximately 13 million children who have experienced the divorce of their parents, and if the present trend continues, 1 million children will be added to this total each year (Brown, 1980).

Such statistics have prompted much debate about the possible impact of divorce, single-parenting and remarriage on children in our schools. Guidubaldi (1980) sums it up forcefully when he states:

> Because our profession's central role is to promote the healthy adjustment of children, we simply can't afford to ignore the widespread family problems and changes in family ecology that profoundly affect child development. We must become the most dedicated students of family dynamics--sensitizing ourselves to such national trends as divorce...(p. 379).

As Guidubaldi notes, such understanding may lead to improved services to parents, teachers and other professionals involved in assisting children through the complex journey of human development. Since divorce is a fact of life for millions of parents and their children, it obligates us to understand the possible effects of this process on our developing youth.

Divorce and single-parenting are deeply felt personal concerns for families and schools. The parents and children are involved in a multiplicity of unique circumstances. There is no one generalization true about the traditional two-parent family experience, and it is just as true that not all families will experience the same problems in divorce and single-parenting. This chapter provides educators with an understanding of divorce and single-parenting and it's effects on parents and children. It also provides some useful suggestions for helping this growing minority of children in our schools. Not all children or families experience the same distress, conflict or problems related to adjustment. But many find psychological, social and economic transitions significant problems in their lives which require understanding, compassion and support from those around them. It is a virtual certainty that you will have personal experience with divorce--whether it is with your own family, your best friends or acquaintances or the children you educate. Intellectual and emotional preparation are positive steps to help the educator deal effectively with problems as they occur.

This chapter has five parts. The first section provides an overview of what we know about divorce and single-parenting. It reviews current research on the subject and represents our general understanding of the impact of these family processes on children and adults. Since the educator will encounter numerous articles in journals, magazines and books on this topic, it is important for this information to be put into a manageable form. The second section addresses special considerations and implications for school personnel, emphasizing suggestions for teachers, administrators and school counselors. These suggestions have been garnered from research, experiences with families, and from other educators and parents who have dealt with the problems single-parents face. Section three contains a number of articles about the world of single-parenting and divorce written by experts in the field. It attempts to provide some guidance for the educator in helping these children. This is important if the educator is to gain added empathy for the concerns of the single parent and provide help when needed. Section four is a bibliography of articles and materials that provide informative reading and help the educator assist children and parents. Section five consists of materials developed by the author and others which should prove useful to the teacher, counselor or administrator.

The Impact of Divorce and Single Parenting on Children

Of the many events in a child's life, few involve such extended periods of turmoil and familial disorganization as the experience of divorce. Coddington (1972) has found that of 35 life-change events, divorce required the greatest psychological readjustment in children. Divorce is an unquestionably disruptive and stressful experience for the family. Children often find the transitions involved in divorce difficult, and many find them extremely painful (Hetherington, 1979). The events leading up to the divorce and culminating in a new stepparent family often take several years. Various estimates have been offered, but a transition period of three to five years may be most representative. This scenario often involves moving from a conflict-ridden family situation before divorce to the disequilibrium of separation, through a period when family members try to regain stability in the single-parent home, to entry into a reconstituted family. This process is often repeated since about 50 percent of remarriages also end in divorce. Divorce represents a highly significant alteration in life adjustment for parents and their children (Hetherington, 1979).

How well children adapt to these experiences depends on the emotional strengths of the parents and child, and their ability to conduct these transitions smoothly (Atkin & Rubin, 1976; Despert, 1953; Gardner, 1977, 1970; Rice, 1978, Salk, 1978). According to Pfeffer (1981):

> Divorce results in a specific re-equilibrium of the family system and creates a different network of communication, visitation, support and potential entry of additional people, such as lawyers, judges, therapists, spouses and stepparents into the family scheme (p. 24).

Children and parents experience important changes in economic status and practical problems in living, as well as changes in parent-child relationships (Hetherington, 1979). For instance, research has shown that single-parent mothers often experience "task overload" in attempting to manage the tasks normally assumed by two parents. Brandwein (1974) suggests that as the divorced mother attempts to distribute her energies across the multiple demands of single-parenting, the child may be maternally deprived in addition to the loss of parental attention and affection. As Hetherington (1979) points out, this may be associated with a chaotic lifestyle where family roles are not well defined and many routine chores are not completed, e.g. erratic meals, bedtimes, etc. The downward economic transition of families headed by a divorced mother may also involve a lowered standard of living and increased geographic mobility (Brown, 1980). Tessman (1978) notes that such moves may represent a significant disruption of community support systems that could play an important positive role in readjustment. These factors place particular demands on both parents and children in the family milieu.

But what specific "effects" do these processes related to divorce have on children's psychosocial adjustment? Research on the effects of divorce has revealed that such experiences may portend difficulties in children's and adolescent's adjustment (Fowler & Richards, 1978; Hetherington, 1979; Parish & Taylor, 1979; Santrock & Tracy, 1978; Shinn, 1978; Young and Parish, 1977). For example, researchers have observed a higher rate of behavior problems in children and adolescents from broken homes (Jacobsen, 1978; Touliatos & Lindholm, 1980). Aggression is more evident in boys from father-absent homes than in their counterparts from intact homes (Cox & Cox, 1979; Hetherington, 1979). Children from divorced homes exhibit more nagging, whining and dependency demands than children from two-parent homes (Hetherington, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975).

A recent large-scale study of 18,000 elementary and secondary-level students reported by Brown (1980) found that single-parent children from divorced homes: tardy more often, disciplined or suspended from school more often, truant more often, and dropped out of school more often than children from two-parent homes. These children were also overrepresented in the low achievement groups and underrepresented in the high achievement groups in schools. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) in a five year longitudinal study of families of divorce, found that at five years following familial dissolution, 37 percent of the children retained significant elements of depression about their present and past family experiences. Parish and Dostal (1980) examined the responses of children in grades five through eight with respect to their evaluations of self, mothers and fathers. They found that children from intact families were much more positive in evaluating themselves and their parents than were children from divorced families. Boike, Gesten, Cowen, Felner and Francis (1978) found that children that come from families of high disorganization and familial problems have significantly more school problems than those that do not. Nunn, Parish and Worthing (1983) in comparing intact, single-parent and reconstituted families found that children and adolescents from intact families demonstrated significantly higher adjustment scores than children of divorced families regardless of parental remarriage. Males in this study had more difficulties in the reconstituted family while females had more problems in the single-parent family.

Current studies of the impact of divorce on the psycho-educational adjustment of children and adolescents indicate significant differences between children of divorce and their intact family counterparts. The conclusions of present research are limited however, and generalizations to specific families are difficult. A number of variables are important in considering the impact of family disruption on children. Four primary elements have been shown to exert important mediating influences on psychosocial adjustment in the divorce/single-parent family. The remainder of this section examines research pertinent to these important influences. These factors are: a) the importance of family happiness; b) the importance of developmental level; c) the importance of gender; and d) the importance of socioeconomic considerations.

The Importance of Family Happiness

An important consideration about the effects of divorce and single-parenting on children is the present level of home adjustment or happiness in the family. The quality of family life as defined by conflict, parent-child relations, and familial harmony is highly significant in bringing about improved adjustment in the divorced home, and in any other structurally defined family environment. Research on the effects of divorce on children has been criticized for it's lack of control over such family "process" variables (Kurdek, 1979; Marino & McCowan, 1976; Marotz-Baden, Adams, Bueche, Munro & Munro, 1979; Raschke & Raschke, 1979), and few studies have attempted to operationalize or define these possible mediating influences. In their extensive review of the literature, Marotz-Baden, et al., (1979) concluded that:

> The research indicates that behavioral problems, general adjustment and interpersonal relations appear to be related less to divorce than to other mediating factors which may exist in any family form. Behavioral problems with children seem more related to conflict in the home than to the structure of the family (p. 6).

Lamb (1977) further supports the importance of a family happiness view when he states:

> As we survey and evaluate the evidence concerning the effects of divorce on personality development, there appear to be only two conclusions that we can state with relative certainty and assurance. The first is that the children of divorced parents, compared with the children of intact families, are "at-risk" for psychoeducational damage. The second conclusion, however, comprises an important qualification: **It is not possible to specify flatly 'the effects of divorce', because there are no sequelae that can be identified as the inevitable consequences of family divorce and family dissolution.** Divorce can be beneficial to children, inasmuch as it signals the termination of hostilities, uncertainties, and harmful hatefulness. On the other hand, family dissolution and the associated severance of important formative relationships can be damaging to the psychosocial adjustment of young children (p. 169).

As Martin (1973) has noted, the patterns of relationships formed in the parent-child relationship constitute a changing array of positive-negative situations for the child. A number of changes in family interactional patterns are associated with divorce (Hetherington, 1979; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1978; Marotz-Baden, Adams, Bueche, Munro & Munro, 1979). Kurdek and Siesky (1978), for example, in their study of divorced parents' perceptions of significant problems with their children, considered dealing with behavior problems, discipline and control, and providing adequate attention and affection to children as most important in their family lives. The most beneficial aspect of the divorce reported by these parents was the reduction of conflict, tension, stress and fear in the home, i.e., the improvement of family processes regarding general family climate or happiness.

Few studies have successfully looked at this question as it applies to the divorced family. Of the few that have, interesting results have been obtained. Nunn et al. (1983) examined the interactions between family type (i.e. an intact family or a divorced family) and family happiness (i.e. whether children evaluated familial adjustment positively or negatively). Children who were from intact-happy homes were consistently the most positive in their self-concepts, school adjustment, peer relationships, anxiety levels and evaluations of parents. Children from divorced-unhappy families, on the other hand, were found to consistently view themselves, school adjustment, peer relations, anxiety levels and parental figures in the most negative fashion. This strongly suggests the importance of family happiness and lessened conflict on children's adjustment in the divorced household. It also suggests that as conflict diminishes, adjustment increases. Raschke and Raschke (1979) in a related study, studied the development of self-concepts in children as a function of family structure (divorced vs. intact families) and family process (i.e. whether the children themselves perceived a harmonious or disharmonious home environment). These authors found no significant relationship between self-concept as a function of family type, but did find a significant inverse relationship between children's self-concepts and the level of conflict reported in their home. They concluded that the "quality" or "processes" that occur in a family structure, and not the family's structure, per se, are the important considerations in facilitating the family's adjustment.

Another attempt to examine both variables of family structure and process is a study conducted by Parish, Dostal and Parish (1981). These researchers compared elementary-age children's self-concepts and evaluations of mothers and fathers while controlling for the degree to which children positively evaluated their family situation. Children in "happy" families (i.e. a positive evaluation of their family) consistently evaluated themselves and parents more positively than those who assessed family situations negatively. A significant three-way interaction effect was obtained that found that males from unhappy-divorced families demonstrated significantly lower self-concept ratings than nearly all other groups. Both the family structure and the ongoing family process may be important mediators of children's perceptions of self and parental figures. The authors' state:

> While it is not possible to say exactly what causes are responsible for the results reported in the present study, the findings nevertheless point clearly to two conclusions: First, that regardless of the intactness of the family, happiness within the family is very important; and second, that regardless of the happiness within the family the intactness of the family is very important (p. 209).

In short, it is important to understand not only the structure of the family (i.e. whether it is intact or divorced) but also to control how the process (i.e. the quality/happiness of family life) influences progress along psychosocial dimensions. Understanding the psychosocial effects that families exert on children is contingent, therefore, on the interwoven dynamics and features of both the structural demands, limitations and exigencies of the home as well as the quality of the home in which the child perceives and finds a growth-producing family environment.

The Importance of Developmental Level

Understanding the various developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence is also an important consideration in deriving meaning from research in the area of divorce. A significant consideration in measuring children's adjustment is associated with the differential effects, not only of divorce, but of the psychological demands and current adjustment of groups at different developmental stages. For example, the individual at the childhood/preadolescent level may respond in a markedly dissimilar fashion than the adolescent whose experiences with family, peers and self are undergoing significant transformation (Meyer & Dusek, 1979). People at different developmental levels have different roles, responsibilities and life experiences. Such experiences may, in turn, influence the adjustment of these groups when confronted with the extraordinary demands of the divorced family. The ability of children to cope with these experiences is mediated by age and concommitant developmental demands.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) suggest that the stress of divorce has the greatest impact on the preschool child. Their interviews with children of divorce indicated that the highest rates of developmental disruptions occurred when the child was in the preschool years. They found that older children were more likely to experience divorce without such problems. Older children have more opportunities for interaction outside the home and are better able to place psychological and social distance between themselves and parents according to Wallerstein and Kelly. This position is supported also by Hetherington (1979):

> The adaptation of the child will also vary with his or her developmental status. The limited cognitive and social competencies of the young child, the young child's dependency on parents and more exclusive restriction to the home will be associated with different responses and coping strategies from those of the more mature and self-sufficient older child or adolescent who operates in a variety of social milieus (p. 852).

Researchers, however, do not all agree on the relative impact that such experiences have on children and adolescents. As Kurdeck (1981) notes:

> Opinion is divided, however, on the nature of their (children and adolescents) affective response. Some view the adolescent's personality development as being minimally affected by the divorce because the adolescent can turn to sources outside of the home for comfort, advise, and nurturance. Others, however, see the adolescent's personality as being maximally affected because of the likelihood of his or her having been exposed to longer periods of parental conflict (p. 861).

The most realistic perspective regarding varying developmental effects is that important concerns exist at each stage, from infants to adults. The demands and needs of parents change with their age as well as their children's. A consideration of developmental level is always warranted when trying to understand the unique circumstances of the divorced parent and child.

The Importance of Gender

Another issue regarding divorce and children centers around the mediation effects of sex-roles and expectancies for the child. Sex roles and expectancies play an exceedingly important role in identification with parents, reciprocal role learning for males and females, and everyday life experiences on the playground and in the school. Some evidence points to possible differential effects on development of males and females in families that have experienced dissolution. Hetherington (1978) discussed the degree that sex roles influence the effects of divorce on children. He found that divorced parents demonstrated less warmth and less control of their children when compared to intact families. This pattern was most pronounced in the relationships between divorced mothers and sons. As Cox and Cox (1979) note:

> In those mother-son interactions, the pattern of less communication, inconsistency and high use of negative sanctions combined with low use of positive sanctions was very apparent. In general, interactions with sons were more conflicted, and sons seemed to have a more difficult time than daughters (p. 62).

Lamb (1977) points to the various effects of family dissolution in the development of masculinity in sons (Biller, 1971; Hetherington & Deur, 1971) as well as deficits in development of their prosocial behavior (Hoffman, 1971). Hammond (1979), in obtaining measures of distractibility, acting-out, happiness and satisfaction with parental attention, found that boys of divorced families were significantly less positive on these dimensions than boys from intact families. These differences were not obtained with respect to females. Hammond concluded that boys from divorced families exhibit a greater reaction than girls to family dissolution.

It appears that the impact of material disharmony is more pervasive for males than for females. Hetherington (1979) states:

> Boys from divorced families, in contrast with girls from divorced families and children from nuclear families, show a higher rate of behavior disorders and problems in interpersonal relations in the home and in the school with teachers and peers (p. 853).

There are a number of explanations for these general findings. Male sex roles sanction greater aggressiveness and indeed culturally prescribe it for boys. This greater male assertiveness necessitates increased use of discipline and control for males. Secondly, most instances of divorce involve at least the temporary loss of the male parent from the household. The young boy more often lacks, role-model of the same sex with mature, controlled behavior. This seems to be highly important particularly for males culturally inclined toward such behavior (Hetherington, 1979). Thirdly, factors within the family system also influence these findings. Boys, for example, are more likely to be exposed to parental quarrels than are girls, and are also more likely to be responsible for the "well-being" of the family when things go wrong. Also boys are viewed more negatively by parents, teachers and peers immediately after divorce than are females (Hetherington & Cox, 1978; Santrock, 1975; Santrock & Tracy, 1978).

The Importance of Socioeconomic Considerations

A final crucial factor is the economic problems single-parents face. Divorce is many times associated with a dramatic decrease in income for the single-parent family (for which approximately 90 percent are mother-headed households). This is partly because less than one-third of ex-husbands contribute to the support of their families. In addition, many divorced women simply do not have the education or employment experience to allow them to obtain the better-paying positions. Stereotypes and sexist attitudes are also an important factor in the employment and promotion of women. Divorced mothers are more likely to have low-paying or part-time positions of temporary duration (Hetherington, 1979). Maintaining two-households when previously supporting only one has a profound effect monetarily and psychologically on single-parents and children. The impact of these conditions on the child may result in erratic or inadequate provisions for child care. Hoffman (1980) adds that if the mother feels "forced" to work, feelings of resentment are likely to manifest themselves. If the mother begins to work at the time of divorce, the preschool child may experience the loss of both parents, which may be reflected in a higher rate of behavior disorders (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1978). Maternal employment may also add to the "task overload" experienced when a single parent attempts to manage the tasks usually performed and shared by two parents. Brandwein (1974) suggests that, as the divorced mother struggles to distribute her energies to the many demands placed on her, the child may be "maternally deprived" rather than paternally deprived of affection and attention. Downward economic transition of families headed by divorced mothers often involves a lowered standard of living and relocation. For the children, such moves involve breaking peer ties and leaving a familiar educational system. These children may also be living in an area with higher delinquency rates, risks to personal safety, fewer recreational and entertainment facilities, and less-adequate schools. As Tessman (1978) noted, such moves further unravel lives when continuity of support systems and the environment could play a very positive role. The specific impact of such socioeconomic transitions on personal adjustment is not clearly defined, but represents a significant factor in parent and child adjustment in the single-parent family. The psychology of change in the socioeconomic sphere does exert significant stressors on the family, which is already undergoing a high level of emotional upheaval from the divorce. Not all families encounter the additional burden of decreasing economic affluence. But when this does occur, it can have an important effect on single-parent's view of self and ability to deal with the other personal and child-centered demands during this period.

Some General Guidelines for Educators. There are no magic answers or sugar pills that will make the dilemmas of divorce and single-parenting go away. Each parent and child must experience some degree of unhappiness and personal readjustment. We can, however, make the experience of single-parenting less stressful by willingly giving of ourselves as human beings and making special allowances which, in the long run, will make a positive difference in the lives of children. Here are some important ideas for dealing with the experience of divorce in the educational sphere.

1. Increase your Divorce Quotient (D.Q.). Each of us has experienced a unique family experience, and formed values, attitudes and opinions regarding those experiences. These attitudes may make it difficult for us to understand the difficulties children of divorce encounter. Talking to others about your feelings and making an honest attempt to understand the divorce experience can go a long way in making you more responsive to children. Obtain information from your public library, parents without partners organizations, school counselors, area education agencies, etc. that discusses the incidence and effects of divorce, and suggests ways to deal with the problems of divorce and single-parenting. This will increase your intellectual and emotional understanding of the divorce/single-parent experience and enable you to answer intelligently and confidently the questions of parents and children.

2. Assume an attitude of willingness to help. Children naturally respond to those who show a genuine concern about their welfare. "Being there" when they need you is tremendously helpful to children. Someone to listen in a nonjudgmental way can be very helpful to a child whose father is absent and who may have mixed feelings he or she cannot discuss with a parent. All children need to feel competent, useful and valued. This needs to be verified by those around them. Make an extra effort with these children to help them over the hump in a difficult family situation.

What Teachers Can Do. Teachers are powerful influence on children. Aside from parents and peers, teachers spend more time with children than anyone else. The teacher is a unique model--an individual who can fill a significant vacuum in the lives of children who face the loss of a parent. Teachers are busy individuals, but the added attention given to these children will make an important positive difference in their lives. Here are some suggestions that have proven useful:

3. Be sensitive to temperament and behavior change in children. Family turmoil and stress may be responsible for changes in the child's behavior at school. Although each child's reaction to family-generated stress may be different, teachers should be aware of changes in mood (anger-depression); health (stomachaches-lethargy), and acting-out responses (fighting or seeking attention). Other symptoms such as withdrawal from activities and peers may be apparent. Teachers can encourage depressed, withdrawn kids to become involved with their peers or in appropriate after-school activities to help them become less isolated and direct their minds away from their problems. Allow some time for children to "talk about things" with you. Encourage creative lay, e.g. clay, finger painting, dolls, etc. to give younger children an opportunity to nonverbally express their concerns. Consult a school counselor or school psychologist if you think a child's behavior has significantly changed. Intervening early when this occurs may prevent further complications.

4. Recognize homework problems of children from single-parent homes. Problems which may interfere with children's ability to do homework include: disorganization of meals or schedules; going to the absent parents home for the weekend; being emotionally upset due to the divorce or continued familial conflicts; an inability of the single parent to devote adequate time or attention to the needs of children. Check with the parents to see if there are any extraordinary problems and discuss ways to alleviate these problems. A child's grades are an important source of self-esteem and anything that can be done in this area should be helpful.

5. Consider family stereotypes in textbook selection, materials and classroom discussions. American society does not reflect the "Norman Rockwell" conception of family life. Provide a variety of examples of alternative family lifestyles and customs in social studies units. Children need not feel as though they are the only ones who have a single parent, an absent father or two fathers. Help children accept the circumstances of their lives and not feel badly or different about them. Discussing these topics can serve as a healthy outlet for children and give them greater insight into the positive aspects of their current family experience.

6. Make an extra effort to open channels of teacher-parent communication. Divorce and the resulting concerns of single-parenting are a particularly stressful and anxious situation for both parents and children. The supportiveness, concern and attempts to bridge the gap between home and school are especially important during this time. Since children may be prone to emotional, social or academic difficulties now, communication can help the parents and school prevent serious difficulties for children.

7. Share aspects of your own experience. Another suggestion which comes from teachers' practical experiences with children is to share aspects of your own life away from school, the problems you faced as a child, and how you overcame and dealt with them. Children often feel alone in their problems and may have no examples of how they might approach solving them. As someone the child admires, teachers are good models to demonstrate coping skills and experiences for children. Don't be afraid to let the child know of your own trials as a child--it may give them strength in their own lives.

8. Provide structure and limits regarding the behavior of children. Try not to be overpermissive or over-indulgent with these kids. Certainly children need compassion, but they also need clear expectations and structure. Self-concept is positively correlated with the degree of performance we expect of our students. When everything is saying to a child "You can't do it," it is important that someone is showing them that they CAN!

What School Counselors Can Do. The school counselor is in a unique position to provide support to children, parents, teachers and administrators regarding the problems of divorce and single-parenting. By virtue of professional training, personal interest and their role in the school, counselors can exert a highly potent impact on the services provided. In the past few years, school counselors have increasingly become involved in the issue of divorce and have contributed greatly to helping families cope with personal and academic difficulties. Many of the suggestions made before apply to the counselor role. There are also some specific suggestions particularly relevant to the role of the school counselor.

9. Encourage formation of ongoing support groups for children of divorce. Nationwide, approximately 20 percent of children in school are presently living in a single-parent family due to divorce. In some districts this figure reaches 50 percent and higher. There is a significant "minority" of children and youth whose concerns are not addressed in the conventional counselor role. Recently, specific models for group counseling of children of divorce have been developed. Explore these options in your school. Promote training of your school psychologist to assist you in such groups. Ask teachers and administrators for their help. Letting children and youth talk to peers and learn from each other is a very helpful technique. The bibliography of materials and appendices provides much useful information in this area.

10. Suggest that the PTA/PTO discuss the effects of divorce, family, etc. on the behavior and academic progress of children and youth. The effect of family quality and happiness has much to do with children's academic and psychological development. This is a very real concern for parents and should be treated seriously in our schools. The community needs to be reminded of this important link to prevent possible problems.

11. Promote the use of bibliotherapeutic methods in your school. There are many books, films, etc. which have been developed on divorce and the single-parent lifestyle. Inform your school staff of their existence so that they may pass the word on to their children. Books are a very personal and nonthreatening way for children to learn about themselves and suggest ways to cope with life's problems. Mothers working (and working in many nontraditional areas) both in intact and single-parent homes is a common occurrence in today's society. Children's views of their "normality" are influenced by the books they read and the assignments they complete. As children in single-parent homes often begin with a perception of this difference, it is important to assure the children that their experience is not odd, unusual or bad. Access to the outstanding books that deal with problems of divorce and family conflict could be an important contribution to the child's wellbeing in both a therapeutic and educational sense.

12. Encourage parents to work together as parents even though they have dissolved their marital role. Try to enlist the help and interest of both parents when you can. Emphasize the importance of the love each parent has for their child and the mutual concerns this should generate. This may be difficult, but such encouragement can be very good for children of divorce.

Understand that divorce is a crisis situation and that parents may not be able to "parent" as well as they would like. The emotional and physical stresses that exist during a divorce are often enormous. Offer support to parents if you can. Suggest to neighbors that they may be able to help also. One of the often cited effects of divorce and single-parenting felt by parents is a perceived "lack of personal competence" particularly for the single-mother. Anything you can do to restore this sense of competence will be reflected in children.

Make it a point to assure parents that children will need time to adjust to divorce, and that difficulties do not mean that the child is permanently psychologically disabled by the experience. Most research indicates that the effects on children diminish significantly about two years after divorce. Understand that adjustments are a necessary ingredient of the divorce experience and that we can learn from them. Children are very resilient. Patience, love and understanding are important elements that will lessen the impact of divorce. Each child has his or her own timetable for readjusting and accommodating to the experience of divorce and single-parenting.

13. Help parents learn to explain divorce to children. From time to time the counselor will be asked by a parent, "What do I say to my children? How do I tell them that we are comtemplating a divorce? What is the best way to explain divorce to my child?" Just as every family has different levels of sophistication, cohesiveness and understanding, the way we tell children about divorce will vary. It is certainly a very difficult thing to do--something that is never easy. Relate these suggestions to parents who request such information:

A) If possible, both parents should tell the children together. One parent should not take the responsibility to explain "why" for the other parent. Telling children together allows the opportunity for children to ask questions and hopefully receive open and sincere answers from their parents.

B) Emphasize that the child is not to be blamed for the breakup of the parents. He or she has done nothing wrong and the parents love and trust the child as before. The child has not "caused" the divorce and cannot reconcile the parent's differences by being different him or herself.

C) Keep the explanations simple. Explain that there is trouble between the parents and that they feel that they cannot live with each other anymore. Explaining details of these differences doesn't seem to be productive. Nor does "blaming" the spouse for all the problems of the marriage. This will encourage resentment and anger in the child not only toward the absent parent, but to the remaining parent and other social contacts. Normally, marriages break up due to a combination of factors contributed by both in the relationship. Blaming one or the other is not only untrue, it also generates a mistrust and confusion on the part of the child of "who" to believe. Tell the truth to children.

D) Accentuate the positive things left for the child in the family. There will be new arrangements and responsibilities, but there will also be a continued love, committment and accessibility by both parents. Only the parents disagree; the child is still wanted, loved and cared for. Focus your responses to the child in a positive manner. Be continually reminded of the child's need for praise and approval. Center on the child's role in "helping" you through the difficult times. Make the child a contributing member in the restorative function of family cohesiveness.

E) Make sure you give the child ample opportunity and freedom to express fears. Encourage questions about aspects of the divorce the child may not understand. Inform the child of such things as custody, visitation, living arrangements, moving, and mom and dad's relationship. Do not overwhelm the child with information, but be prepared for questions of this sort. Information the child trusts can lessen present fears and avoid unnecessary anxieties later on.

F) Assure children more than once. Most children will not understand the information or ramifications of the divorce the first time they are told. Share the information as often as necessary. Set aside a time solely for you and your children to talk. Make this a regular time which can be counted on. This is a good idea for any family, but is especially important during the divorce process.

What Administrators Can Do. The school principal is crucial in setting policy and goals relating to the educational welfare of children. Since the decisions regarding supportive services to single-parent families are largely contingent on the school principal and administrator, they are immensely important in ensuring of quality support services to children who have experienced family dissolution. These suggestions have proven useful to administrators in assisting families of divorce and single-parents.

14. Provide at least one inservice for school personnel each year on the subject of divorce and problems of single-parents. Seek out experts in the community (parents, counselors, psychologists, lawyers, etc.) who would be willing to speak about the effects of divorce and who could assist the school in any programs for single-parent families.

15. Be sensitive to the financial problems many single-parents face, e.g. buying books, meals, supplies, sports equipment, special activities, transportation, etc. Since the financial status of single-parents may drop drastically following divorce, be aware of the problems this may cause and lessen this burden when you can.

16. Support teachers who want to deal with loss in their classrooms. In some cases, teachers may wish to develop and promote activities to help children cope with the transitions of divorce. Since such additional demands require much effort on their part, support them in their efforts (i.e. release time from class, time for training, funds for ordering materials, etc.). The additional support the school can give may mean a great deal to a child.

17. Disseminate information. School newsletters and newspapers can publish information about support services, articles on how parents and children can handle divorce, information about community programs, people, etc. The systematic dissemination of such information is often important in programs that attempt to generate community awareness of the problems and possibilities divorce generates in families.

18. Try to involve both parents whenever possible in the child's education. When possible, find out who has custody and visitation rights. Who should be contacted for some things and not for others? Who should be notified in case of illness, permission for a special field trip? Suggest revision of old school forms that include the addresses of both the custodial and non-custodial parent so the non-custodial parent can receive information about school activities, have access to parent-teacher conferences and receive the child's report card.

19. Provide child care facilities for single-parents who have to bring younger children with them while they attend teacher-parent conferences and other school activities. Also, hold conferences and meetings that are convenient for all parents.

20. Encourage parent-school communication. Parent-teacher discussion groups can lead to understanding which often leads to solving problems. Encourage an "open door" policy for teachers and yourself. This is a difficult time for the family and the more support they receive from the school and community, the easier the transition into the single-parent lifestyle.

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Books for Children and Adults

BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

"Non-fiction"

Boys and Girls Book About Divorce by Richard Gardner (Grades 5 and up). A discussion of sensible attitudes in divorce.

Boys and Girls Book About Stepparenting (Grades 5 and up). A discussion about concerns in stepfamilies.

What Every Kid Should Know by Jonah Kalb and David Viscott, M.D. (Grades 4 and up). Deals with areas of life important to kids today--insights into emotions such as anger, loneliness; suggestions on how to cope with feelings; a special chapter for kids who have or are experiencing divorce in their family.

What Would You Do? A Child's Book About Divorce by Barbara S. Cain and Elissa P. Benedik (Ages 3-8). The book deals with the common situations present in a family going through divorce. It asks the child, "What would you do?" in each situation without offering a recommended reaction.

A Look At Divorce by Margaret Sanford Pursell (Ages 4-7). Reassures children that divorce will not change parents' love, only living arrangements and life styles.

How Does It Feel When Your Parents Get Divorced? by Terry Berger (grades 3-6). Helps the many children of divorce recognize, share and ease their problems.

How To Get It Together When Your Parents Are Coming Apart by Arlene Richards (any age).

"Fiction"

A Book For Jordan by Marcia Newfield (Grades 2-5).

A Cat Called Camouflage by Cordelin Jones (Grades 5 & up). A 12 year old girl is helped with adjustment due to a cat.

A Father Like That by Charlotte Zolotow.

A Friend Can Help by Terry Berger (Early readers). A girl tells her best friend her feelings about her parents' divorce.

A Hero Ain't Nothing But A Sandwich by Alice Childress (Grades 5-8). Involves a black family and uses black dialect. A boy who lives with his mother and her different boyfriends.

A Month of Sundays by Rose Blue (Ages 10-12). A believable tale of how divorce changes the life of a boy: a different environment, a tired mother, and a father who visits only on Sundays.

A New Mother For Martha by Phyliss Green (Ages 4-8). An exceptionally sensitive rendering of how a young girl learns to cope with the traumatic death of her mother, and remarriage of her father.

A Family Failing by Arundel, Honor (Ages 12-16). Changes in economic status result in marital separation in Joanna's Scottish family.

A Girl Called Al by Constance Green. (Ages 10-14). The protagonist, a 12-year-old from a happy family, tells the story of her important friendsnips with Al and Mr. Richards, the superintendent of the building where both girls live.

A Look At Divorce by Margaret Pursell. (Ages 4-7). This book emphasizes the permanent bonds of birth and truly allows for today's expanded alternative. NON-FICTION.

All Kinds of Families by Norma Simon. (Ages 5-7). With the goal of helping children to broaden their concepts and accept themselves, a vast variety of families are portrayed. NON-FICTION.

And Leffe Was Instead of a Dad by Kerstin Thorvall. (Ages 10-13). Nine year old Magnus has lived most of his life with his single mother in Sweden. When his mother's friend, Leffe, comes to live with them, Magnus' reaction is mixed.

A Private Matter by Ewing, Kathryn. (Ages 7-10). An only child living with her divorced mother, Marcy, has not seen her father since early childhood.

Ellen Grae by Bill & Vera Cleaver. (Ages 9-12). Ellen Grae lives in a warm and loving foster home because her eccentric parents are divorced and cannot care for her. She likes to tell preposterous tales of gory deaths.

Everett Anderson's Year by Lucille Clifton. (Ages 4-8). A poignant poem for each month relates the events and feelings in the life of a black 7 year old.

Eliza's Daddy by Ianthe Thomas. (Ages 4-8). Eliza's father is divorced from her mother, has been remarried for a while and has a new baby. He cannot be civil to his former wife and talks to her only through Eliza.

Gertrude Kloppenberg (Private) by Ruth Hooker. (Ages 8-10). Gertrude, a preteenager, describes, in diary form, her attempts to cope with life: her loneliness while her single mother is at work, her search for relationships. While helpful for discussing alternate sources of love, the absence of the father is not explained.

Gertrude Kloppenberg II by Ruth Hooker. (Age 8-11). In her diary Gertrude explores the many kinds of families which children live.

Heads You Win, Tails I Lose by Isabelle Holland. (Ages 12-16). Teenaged Melissa is overweight and caught in the marital difficulties of her sparring parents.

I Love My Mother by Paul Zindel. (Ages 4-8). The reasons one boy treasures his mother. A separated or divorced woman, the mother is lonely and shares that secret with him.

Is That You, Miss Blue? by M.E. Kerr. (Ages 12-16). Continuing denial is not a productive approach to loss. Flanders' mother runs off with a man young enough to be her son.

It's Not What You Expect by Norma Klein. (Ages 12-16). This novel's unusual theme concerns a marital separation in which the parents reunite.

A Piece of the World by Mildred Walker. (Grades 4 & up). Calder spends the summer in Vermont while her divorced mother remarries and gets her new life together.

A Really Weird Summerby Eloise J. McGraw. (Ages 10 & up). Four children spend the summer of their parents' divorce with a little-known great aunt and uncle.

A Smart Kid Like You by Stella Pevsner. (Grades 4 & up.) Daddy's new wife is Nina's seventh-grade teacher.

Blowfish Live In The Sea by Paula Fox. (Grades 5 & up). A step-brother-sister story.

Chloris and the Creeps by Kim Plott. (Junior high and up.) Parents divorce, father commits suicide, then creeps come around to marry beautiful mother.

Danny Rowley Little by Reginald Maddock. (Grades 5 & up.) Danny goes wild when his mother remarries and he doesn't like anyone.

Duffy's Rocks by Edward Fenton. (Ages 12-14). A boy lives with his grandmother after his father deserts the family.

Emily and the Klunky Baby and the Next Door Dog by Joan M. Lexau. (Grades 1-3). Emily's divorced mother has so many responsibilities she doesn't have much time for Emily.

Free To Be - You and Me, Francine Klagsburn. (Pre & early readers.) Includes a story titled "Zachery's Divorce," which points out how children see their parents' divorce as their own instead.

Guy Lenny by Harry Mazer. (Ages 10-12). Tough dilemma of a 12 year old boy who becomes the focal point of a bitter custody battle.

I, Trissy by Norman Mazer. (Grades 6-8). Parents get divorced and mother remarries.

Ice River by Phyllis Green. (Grades 3-6).

It's Not The End of the World by Judy Blume. (Grades 4-6.) Karen tries to get her divorced parents back together and fails.

Kick a Stone Home by Doris Smith. (Grades 5 & up.)

Leap Before You Look by Mary Stols. (Ages 12-16). Honest account of a girl's realization of her parents' marital difficulties and her inability to accept the impending divorce.

Lucky Wilma by Wendy Kindred. (Ages 4-8). Not all divorces are sad. Wilma looks forward to each Saturday when she and her daddy will be together. She even helps her father discover new meaning for himself in life.

Matt Gargan's Boy by Alfred Stone. (Grades 3-5). A baseball story about a boy who feels threatened by Mom's new boyfriend.

Me and Mr. Stonner by Evan Hunter. (Upper elementary.) Girl uncertain about feelings for real and stepfather.

Me Day by Joan M. Lexau. (Grades 1-3.) Rafer worries that his divorced father won't remember him on his birthday.

Jenny's Revenge by Anne Baldwin. (Ages 5-8). When Jenny's newly divorced mother goes off to teach, Jenny takes an instant dislike to her baby-sitter, the traditional, domineering, sexist Mrs. Cramie.

Lillan by Gunilla Norris. (Ages 8-12). Set in Sweden, this story relates a preadolescent girl's fears of losing love. Lillan's parents are divorced; her father has moved to another continent.

Morris and His Brave Lion by Helen Spelman Rogers. (Ages 4-8). Father asks his son, Morris to be brave in the face of divorce and gives him a stuffed lion to remember his words by. Father, however, is not as brave as Morris.

Mom, the Wolf Man and Me by Norma Klein. (Ages 10 & up.) Brett, an illegitimate preteenager, has never had a father and is content to live alone with her unconventional photographer mother. When her mother does meet a man, Brett struggles to adjust.

Mushy Eggs by Florence Adams. (Ages 4-8.) David and Sam are taken care of by a baby-sitter because their separated parents both work.

My Dad Lives in a Downtown Hotel by Peggy Mann. (Ages 8-11.) For Joey, divorce means guilt, hopes for reunion, shame, anger, and sadness. He must learn to adjust to the reality that his father doesn't live at home anymore.

My Family by Felicity Jen. Father raises two children after mother deserts.

Neighborhood Knight by Eleanor Schick. (Ages 5-9.) A boy protects his mother and sister when they move into their castle, which is a highrise apartment. Will encourage children to discuss their own fantasies.

Nobody Has To Be A Kid Forever by Hila Coleman. (Grades 7-9.) A girl assumes parental role when mother leaves.

No Easy Circle by Phyllis Naylor. (Ages 12-16.) Shelly's parents are divorced and her father lives half way across the country. Her working mother drinks.

North Star by Anne Schraff. (Ages 11-14.) Tamara's parents divorce when she is a junior in high school. Her reactions to that and mother's remarriage.

Otis Spofford by Beverly Clearly. (Ages 8-11.) Otis is an incurable attention seeker and he reserves his antics for school. His single, working mother hasn't enough time for him.

Once at the Weary Why by Mildred Lawrence. (Junior high.) Girls lives with mother who then marries the school principal.

Striped Ice Cream!! by Joan Lexau. (Ages 6-10.) Becky searches for belonging. The youngest of five children, she feels the burden of isolation. Father has deserted.

Susan's Magic by Nan Agle. (Ages 7-10.) Susan comes to term with her parents' divorce and her father's physical and spiritual distance through a series of smaller losses.

Some of the Days of Everett Anderson by Lucille Clifton. (Ages 4-8.) Father is gone, and Everett speaks of his absence. Mother, too, is missing, for she works much of the time. A poem for each day.

The Grizzly by Anna bel Johnson & Edgar Johnson. (Ages 10-13.) David's harsh and demanding father, absent from his life for many years, suddenly arrives to take him camping.

The Little Dark Thorn by Ruth Arthur. (Grades 6-8.) A girl's story about separated parents.

The Mimosa Tree by Vera & Bill Cleaver. (Ages 13-14.) Involves a stepmother.

The Phaedra Complex by Jeanette Eyerly. (Junior High) 15 year old daughter falls in love with stepfather. Involves mother/daughter competition.

Taking Sides by Norma Klein. (Ages 10-12.) A girl who lives with her father and sees her mother only on weekends displays insights into her parents' delicate problems and, at times, seems more mature than the adults.

The Dollar Man by Harry Mazer. (Ages 10-13.) Marcus enjoys a good relationship with his never-married mother. Inspite of that, he suffers from obesity and compulsive fantasies concerning the father and sets out to find him.

The Man Without A Face by Isabelle Holland. (Ages 12-16.) Charles has been isolated, his life a series of failures. His mother has married several times and is about to marry once more. Deals with awakening sexuality.

This Is A Recording by Barbara Corcoran. (Grades 5 & up.) Marianne, a high school sophomore, goes to Montana to stay with her grandmother while her parents' marriage disintegrates.

To The Green Mountains by Eleanor Cameron. (Ages 12-16.) Kath is overjoyed when her mother makes the painful decision to divorce her father, an unreliable, inattentive man.

Too Hot for Ice Cream by Jean Van Leeuwen. (Ages 4-8.) The independence that results from having a working mother and an absent father can led to unexpected benefits.

Two Homes to Live In by Barbara Shook. (Ages 4-8.) Written from the child's point of view and encourages communications between parent and child.

Two Special Cards by Sonia Lisker and Leigh Dean. (Ages 4-7.) Sad turns to glad when Hazel and baby brother Bill realize they now have two loving homes.

To Live a Lie by Anne Alexander. (Grades 5 & up.) Jennifer weaves a series of lies to cover up the fact that her parents are divorced.

The Night Daddy by Maria Gripe, translated by Gerry Bothmer. (Ages 7-11.) Julia's single mother hires a male babysitter to watch over Julia while her mother works the night shift.

Veronica Ganz by Marilyn Sachs. (Ages 8-12.) Veronica and her siblings have a stepfather whom they like, but the children and their mother would all like to see the faraway father who promises to visit but never does.

Where Is Daddy? The Story of a Divorce by Beth Goff. (Ages 4-8.) An unflinching portrayal of the anger of divorce. Grandmother calls Janey-dear a bad girl when she cries out her unhappiness.

Who Is Erika? by Ann Falk. (Ages 13-15.) Swedish story about a girl and her stepfather.

What's Going to Happen to Me? by Barbara Berson. (Junior High) A high school boy wonders what's going to happen after his parents divorce.

C. Books for Adults

Children of Divorce by J. Louise Despert

Children of Parting Parents by L.H. Tessman

Children of Separation and Divorce edited by T.R. Stuart & L.E. Abt

Creative Divorce by Mel Krantzler

Explaining Divorce to Children by E.A. Grollman

Marital Separation by Robert S. Weiss

Talking About Divorce: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child by Earl Grollman

The Parents' Book About Divorce by R.A. Gardner

What Every Child Would Like Parents to Know About Divorce by Lee Salk

What Shall We Tell The Kids by Bennett Olshaker

When Parents Divorce by Bernard Steinser

Part-time Father by Edith Atkin & Estelle Rubin

D. More Information

1. "Children in a Single-Parent Home" is four pages of facts put together by Parents Without Partners, Inc. (PWP). For a free copy, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Parents Without Partners, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20014.

2. PWP also publishes a "Children's Reading List," also available free by writing to the previous address. The reading list is broken down into grade levels and includes recommended books for teens and adults.

3. A 21-page "Audiovisual Guide" is available from PWP for 50 cents. It includes descriptions, rental and purchase prices and addresses of companies that produce appropriate films, filmstrips and cassettes. The guide's focus is on materials for adults, teens and children. Some of its topics are: death, divorce, separation, family life, parenting, remarriage and self-awareness.

4. The National Mental Health Association is in the process of putting together a package of sources of materials on single-parent children. Write to Public Information and Education, National Mental Heath Association, 1800 North Kent, Arlington, VA 22209.

5. The National Institute of Mental Health has available two pamphlets on children of divorce, as well as one called "Talking to Children About Death". For free copies, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to National Institute of Mental Health, Public Inquiries, 5600 Fisher Lane, Rockville, MD 20857.

6. For further information on the discussion group for children of divorce run by Frank Nelligan, you can write directly to him at Bridge School, Lexington, MA 02173.

7. Questions on the discussion group run by Liane Leighton should be addressed to her, c/o Salem Elementary School, Port Washington, NY 11050.

Following is a sampling of books recommended by PWP:

A Guidebook for Teaching Family Living by Lynne Ann DeSpelder and Nathalie Prettyman (Allyn & Bacon). Adult

Divorce is a Grown Up Problem by Janet Sinberg (Avon). Beginning readers.

Eliza's Daddy by Ianthe Thomas (Harcourt). Beginning readers.

Marinka, Katinka and Me (Susie) by Winifred Madison (Bradbury Press) Grades 2-4.

A Book For Jordan by Marcia Newfield (Atheneum). Grades 3-5.

It's Not the End of the World by Judy Blume (Bradbury Press). Grades 4-7.

How Does It Feel When Your Parents Get Divorced? by Terry Berger (Messner). Grades 4 & up including adults.

The Boys and Girls Book About Divorce by Richard Gradner (Bantam). Grades 4 & up including adults.

A Smart Kid Like You by Stell Pevsner (Seabury). Grades 5 & up.

Leap Before You Look by Mary Stob (Harper and Row). Grades 7 & up.

"Zachary's Divorce" in Free to Be Me by Linda Sitea (McGraw-Hill). All ages.

*From Palker, P. How to Deal with the Single-Parent Child in the Classroom, Teacher, 1980, 51-54.

Appendix A: Common Responses to Divorce: Parental Perspectives

"Common Responses to Divorce: Parental Perspectives"

Research regarding how parents respond to the divorce experience has revealed some common themes summarized below:

Anxiety: Both males and females experience considerable anxiety regarding the divorce. Who is affected more is a matter of controversy, but both husbands and wives experience many stress factors (separation, loss of love, feelings of sadness, rejection, concerns about money and childrearing) which affect personal functioning. How this anxiety is dealt with will vary depending on the individual.

Loneliness: Divorce is clearly a time when one is separated from past ties and commitments. The husband leaves, children have divided loyalties, old friends and acquaintances, relatives take on different relationships -- in many cases a distancing occurs. Loneliness is an often reported response and one that takes much support to overcome.

Loss of Self-Identity: Parents experience many losses which generate a sense of losing one's identity. Each of us is defined by our personal roles (husband, wife), work roles, support systems (family, friends, co-workers) our perceptions of the future (where will I be 10 years from now, etc.) our standard of living and many other factors. These things often undergo tremendous change in a short time -- changes which the spouse may have little control over. "Who am I?" becomes a central question.

Surviving in the Single-Parent World: The rules of social life are constantly changing. How the 32 year-old fits into the lifestyle and social demands of single-adulthood presents opportunities and problems. The desire for companionship, intimacy, respect and commitment are there, but the rules and perspectives have changed. Money, time, childrearing and self-esteem are inextricably entwined into the social fabric of the single-parent's world. It is a journey through an uncharted land.

General Suggestions for the Single-Parent

1. **Center on the Positive within Yourself**: Yes, there are many obstacles to happiness, but there are more opportunities also. Each person must undergo stress when lifestyles change. You must remember that this is a temporary change--something to which you will accommodate.

2. **Get Involved with Life**: Hiding from old friends, becoming a hermit, telling yourself that all women or all men aren't "worth it" is certain to prolong any current problems you have. Establish relationships, renew old ones, join a group at school, church or in the community. Doing something positive with yourself is the best prescription for helping yourself.

Appendix B: Common Responses to Divorce: Child Perspectives

"Common Responses to Divorce: Child Perspectives"

Each child will respond to divorce, single-parenting and remarriage differently. Generalizations regarding how a child will respond are difficult. There are, however, common themes which appear in varying degrees with children when divorce occurs.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES: Thoughts of Children

Guilt: I am to blame for the divorce. If I had been better, my folks would still be together.

Anger: How can they do this to me? My parents are so stupid to treat us this way. I'll get even with them!

Blaming the Father or Mother: It's all Dad's fault - he was always starting the fights OR Mom causes most of the unhappiness - she never listens to me.

Fear of Alienation/Abandonment: I think that my parents will both go off and leave me. My folks probably think how nice it would be if I weren't around.

Belief of Reconciliation: Someday, my mom and dad will love each other just like before. My parents not living together is just a temporary thing.

Negativism toward Marriage: People are always unhappy when they are married. I can't count on marriage to be a happy time.

THE STEPFAMILY

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Introduction

The American family is undergoing many changes in composition, structure and function. It is estimated that 96 percent of all Americans marry, with 40-50 percent of these marriages ending in divorce. Approximately 80 percent of those divorced will remarry, with 50 percent of these marriages ending in divorce. It is projected that by 1990 there will be more single-parent and stepfamily units in existence than the traditional nuclear family.

One-third of American children under age 18 do not live in an intact or nuclear family. It is estimated that one out of every six or seven children under age 18 is a stepchild. By 1975, there was approximately 25 million adults who were stepparents with an estimated half million more becoming stepparents every year.

Still, most regard the intact nuclear family as the optimal child-rearing unit in our society. Deviations from this norm are commonly believed to have negative affects (Touliatos & Lindhold, 1980). Stepfamilies must struggle to find their own identity in a society that doesn't know quite how to deal with them. As aptly put by McGoldrick and Carter (1980):

> If they are not pressured to be like intact families, remarried families are offered two opposing myths of stepfamily life; the cruel picture of the fairy tales (Cinderella, Snow White and the like) for which the only solution is escape, or the dream of becoming the Brady Bunch, the big jolly family that works it all out comfortably with no dangling ends or unresolvable feelings (p. 266).

No definite longitudinal research has been done to determine the success of remarriages as compared to first marriages. There also has been no satisfactory research that examines the formation of stepfamilies and the ensuing effects on stepfamily members. Some confusion and inconsistency in stepfamily research has to do with problems of family definitions, often resulting in studies that are not comparable. In referring to stepfamilies, several terms have been used including blended, reconstituted, Rem, broken, etc.

"Stepfamily" as used in this chapter is the definition advocated by Visher and Visher (1979):

1. Families in which children live with a remarried parent and a stepparent.

2. Families in which children from a previous marriage visit with their remarried parent and stepparent.

3. Families in which the couple is not married and children from a previous marriage either live with or visit with the couple.

Characteristics of the Stepfamily

All families change as they experience joy and stress in their life cycle. The unique developmental issues faced by stepfamilies in their life cycle are shown in Figure 1. The mixture of feelings accompanying these changes can be intensified in stepfamilies due to the pressure to "make it this time" and finally live happily ever after. Stepfamilies often experience a greater stress level which is increased by the lack of role models and definition for the stepfamily.

Stepfamilies are families born of loss (Visher & Visher, 1982). Stepfamily members must deal with their feelings of loss, something all of them have experienced. The parents and children are left with feelings surrounding the divorce and loss of their previous family. Even an adult who has never been married or had children who enters into a stepfamily must deal with the loss of his or her expectation of a wedding, marriage and family that did not include children and an ex-spouse. Recognizing and accepting these feelings can help stepfamilies live with more realistic expectations and less disappointment.

This takes time, patience and adaptability. Relationships take time to develop and many stepfamilies are haunted by the desire and expectation of instant love and caring among all family members. Unfortunately, this instant love is not the norm. It is difficult to blend new people together, especially when everyone come with their own unique family history and traditions. Territories are invaded, subgroups are infiltrated and old ways are questioned. If this sounds too much like a war zone, one must consider the power issues involved in coalitions, camps and the effects of bringing two family systems together. Many differences exist and the new family must shift and change to accommodate its new functions.

Stepfamilies are structurally and emotionally different from first families (Visher & Visher, 1982). Between visitation schedules, relationships with ex-spouses, blended family histories and constant changes taking place, stepfamily boundaries are often unclear. Recognizing their differentness and giving themselves permission to be different, even if society does not, is an important first step for stepfamilies.

Visher and Visher (1979) outline common family difficulties that are exaggerated in stepfamilies due to the complexity of the family structure and other difficulties that arise from unique stepfamily characteristics: 1) there is a biological parent outside of the stepfamily unit, 2) most children in stepfamilies hold membership in two households, 3) the role definition for stepparents is ill-defined, 4) the fact that "blended" families come together from diverse historical backgrounds accentuates the need for tolerance of differences, 5) step-relationships are new and untested, and not as "given" as they are in intact families, 6) the children in stepfamilies have at least one extra set of grandparents, and 7) stepfamily financial arrangements.

Duberman (1975) interviewed 88 remarried couples to determine their level of family integration and found that: 1) family integration was better if the previous spouse had died rather than divorced, and if the

Remarried Family Formation: A Developmental Outline*

Steps	Prerequisite Attitude	Developmental Issues
1. Entering the new relationship	Recovery from loss of first marriage (adequate) "emotional divorce")	Recommitment to marriage and to forming a family with readiness to deal with the complexity and ambiguity
2. Conceptualizing and planning new marriage and family	Accepting one's own fears and those of new spouse and children about remarriage and forming a stepfamily Accepting need for time and patience for adjustment to complexity and ambiguity of: 1. Multiple new roles 2. Boundaries: space, time, membership and authority 3. Affective issues: guilt, loyalty conflicts, desire for mutuality, unresolvable past hurts	a. Work on openness in the new relationships to avoid pseudomutuality b. Plan for maintenance of cooperative co-parental relationships with ex-spouses c. Plan to help children deal with fears, loyalty conflicts and membership in two systems d. Realignment of relationships with extended family to include new spouse and children e. Plan maintenance of connections for children with extended family of ex-spouse(s)
3. Remarriage and reconstitution of family	Final resolution of attachment to previous spouse and ideal of "intact" family: Acceptance of a different model of family with permeable boundaries	a. Restructuring family boundaries to allow for inclusion of new spouse-stepparent b. Realignment of relationships throughout subsystems to permit interweaving of several systems c. Making room for relationships of all children with biological (noncustodial) parents, grandparents, and other extended family d. Sharing memories and histories to enhance stepfamily integration

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*Variation on a developmental schema presented by Ranson et al. (1979) from Carter, E.A. & McGoldrick, M. (Eds.), The Family Life Cycle. New York: Gardner Press, 1980. Reprinted by permission.

Figure 1

new spouse had divorced; 2) all parent-child relationships were better when the remarried couple had children of their own and when the wife's children from her first marriage were with her; 3) stepfathers who were unmarried related better to their stepchildren than men who had left children with an ex-wife,; 4) all stepmothers related better to younger children; 5) widows related better than divorced women to their stepchildren; 6) the stepmother-stepdaughter relationship was the most problematic; 7) the longer the stepfamily has been together, the higher the level of family integration; and 8) remarried relationships were best when extended family approved or accepted the marriage.

The research also suggests a positive correlation between socioeconomic status and stepfamily success. Financial resources have always been a significant family issue, one that is further complicated by child support, alimony, and the responsibility of more than one household. Therefore, financial issues are pronounced in most stepfamilies.

Studies of adults indicate that individuals growing up in stepfather families do not differ in measures of social functioning from individuals growing up in nuclear families. However, stepmother-stepchild relationships are much more tenuous and difficult than stepfather-stepchild relationships, particularly for the stepmother and stepdaughter. Surprisingly enough, stepsibling relationships are relatively good, especially when there is a half-sibling to join the two groups together (Visher & Visher, 1979).

A consistent theme characterizing stepfamilies is ambiguity. McGoldrick and Carter (1980) discuss this issue in terms of 1) the instant multiple roles; complex, conflicting and ambiguous new roles and relationships; 2) complex and ambiguous boundaries of the family system; and 3) affective problems - wishing for the resolution of ambiguity. Stepfamilies can deal with this ambiguity by developing new roles and forging new family traditions.

The Remarried Couple

In a study of family functioning, Lewis, Beavers, Gossett and Phillips (1976) identified the cohesiveness of the couple as one very important dimension in psychologically healthy families. If the relationship between the spouses is strong and withstands attempts by the children to split or weaken the alliance, the family unit is able to cope successfully. Couple unity in a stepfamily is critical for effective family functioning. However, it is often difficult to achieve and maintain. Many parents feel it is a betrayal of their children to form a primary relationship with their new partner, because parent-child relationships have preceded the new couple relationship (Visher & Visher, 1982). However, a strong couple relationship is beneficial to the children and the adults. It is through this good couple relationship that the adults can work out the inevitable differences, provide a positive role model for their children, and prevent the loss of another family unit.

Visher and Visher (1979) identified many of the pressures faced by the couple in a stepfamily as follows:

External Pressures on the Couple

1. Moving into the partner's neighborhood
2. Negative responses from in-laws
3. Characteristics of community institutions
4. Legal considerations

Internal Pressures on the Couple

1. Differences in life-style
2. Previous bonds existing to this relationship
3. Relationships with ex-spouses
4. Financial difficulties
5. Discipline problems
6. Divisiveness of stepchildren

Discipline is an important issue that must be negotiated between the couple. Until the stepparent has an opportunity to build a friendly relationship with the stepchildren, discipline may be handled primarily by the natural parent. It takes time, often a matter of 18 to 24 months for the stepchildren to accept the discipline of a stepparent (Visher & Visher, 1982).

Stepparenting is a difficult job with many negative connotations attached to it. Again, the couple relationship is critical, hopefully offering the stepparent support and comfort. New family patterns and traditions must be established so all family members, including the stepparent can be integrated into the new family system. Stepparenting is usually more successful if stepparents carve out a role for themselves that is different from and does not compete with the biological parents (Visher & Visher, 1982).

There has been much speculation regarding the success or failure of subsequent marriages. The time period between relationships is an important variable. If the remarriage occurs too soon or the new relationship begins while the emerging parent-to-be is still with his or her first spouse, then it is likely that the old relationship will impede heavily on the new one. If the single period is lengthy, particularly if children are involved, it is more likely to be difficult to incorporate the new spouse into the parent-child dyad, hence paving the way for marital dysfunction (Sager, Brown, Crohn, Engel, Rodstein & Walker, 1983). The optimum period for remarriage is three to five years after the initial separation (Hunt & Hunt, 1977; Sager et al., 1983). In Sager's study (cited in Sager et al., 1983) 65 percent of formerly married adults show greater maturity and a more healthy marital interaction in second marriages.

Children in Stepfamilies

Adults and children entering a stepfamily usually operate from very different perspectives. Remarriage for the adults is a desired gain of an important significant relationship. The children, on the other hand, may view this adult as an intruder into an established system, someone who they will now have to share their parent with. Visher and Visher (1979) identified many of the reactions and feelings children have at the time of the remarriage.

1. Dealing with loss
2. Divided loyalties
3. Where do I belong?
4. Membership in two households
5. Unreasonable expectations
6. Fantasies of natural parents' reuniting
7. Guilt over causing the divorce
8. Problems with identity & sexuality for adolescent stepchildren

The remarriage of one or both parents represents another disruption in a child's individual life cycle. The remarriage follows two other major stress points in a child's life; disruption in the nuclear household and involvement in double single-parent households. The response of the child is contingent on genetic, developmental, systemic, intraphysic and environmental influences (Sager, et al., 1983).

Children are part of two biological parents and they nearly always have very strong pulls to both parents (Visher & Visher, 1982). Therefore, it is extremely helpful and important to the children if ex-spouses can maintain a civil relationship with one another. This reduces the child's chances of getting caught in the middle and having to take sides. Under no circumstances should the child be used by a parent to get back at the ex-spouse. Children are not message takers, so no matter how difficult it may be, biological parents should try to relate directly to one another for the benefit of the children. This is certainly not an easy task, but it will reduce the loyalty conflicts that children face.

Rejection of a stepparent may have nothing to do with the personal characteristics of the stepparent. In fact, warm and loving stepparents may cause especially severe loyalty conflicts for children (Visher & Visher, 1979). Biological parents must allow their children to live in both households, and must not be threatened by the fact that children can care about another adult.

Visiting children may feel more like outsiders in the stepfamily, especially if there are children living continuously in the family. Special effort is necessary to integrate them into the family and prevent sibling rivalry. Preserving original relationships is also important and can help children experience less loss at sharing a parent (Visher & Visher, 1982). A blend of stepfamily time and individual time for a parent and his or her natural children should be established.

Integrating a stepfamily can be more difficult when teenage children are involved. Teenagers have had a longer time period with the previous family and their habits are more firmly established. Adolescents are dealing with their own individual changes, and may not accept this major family change. They are moving in and out of a family system which is in a period of transition. Teenagers are also faced with parents who are dealing with many of the same issues they are, e.g., dating, relationships, etc. Sexuality is usually more apparent in stepfamilies because of the new couple relationship, and because children may suddenly be living with other children with whom they have not grown up (Visher & Visher, 1982). This often causes confusion and uncomfortableness. It is important for the children to receive affection and to be aware of tenderness between the couple, but it may also be important for the couple to minimize to some extent the sexual aspects of the household and to help the children understand and accept their sexual attraction to one another or to the adults (Visher & Visher, 1982).

Implications for Educators

The idea that stepfamilies are not fully accepted by society is reflected in studies of teachers' perceptions of children from different family types. Teachers' ratings favored children from two-parent families and often did not agree with more objective measures (Blechman, 1982). For example, teachers rated single parents as less interested than other parents, although these groups of parents did not differ in frequency of school visits (Ferri, 1976). When shown videotapes, teachers rated children more negatively on happiness, emotional adjustment and coping ability when they thought the child came from a broken home (Santrock & Tracy, 1978). In a study of the moral behavior of father-absent and father-present children, the only difference that emerged was in the teacher ratings (Santrock, 1972).

Helping children cope with divorce, remarriage and stepfamily relationships is no longer seen as an issue outside the school setting (Drake, 1981; Sager, Brown, Crohn, Engel, Rodstein & Walker, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). This stems from the belief that school personnel cannot expect maximum academic performance from students faced with significant family changes. When a student's family life is in transition, teachers may be the one person seen as stable and consistent, rather than preoccupied or temporarily unavailable. This stability is perhaps the first step in the important role the school can play in helping children and parents in stepfamilies.

In their study of children of divorce, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that:

> the children on the whole received less help than we expected from teachers. In fact, more than half the children had no support at all from this source. Many

> teachers knew nothing about the divorce, often learning about it from the child. School personnel frequently lacked knowledge of the family and hesitated to intrude on family privacy (p. 44).

The school setting can be an ideal place to begin intervention focusing on three areas: 1) inservice training for school personnel; 2) intervention with students; and 3) services provided to parents. Faculty workshops on stepfamily issues provide staff with factual information on stepfamily dynamics and dispel pervasive myths about how stepfamilies function. With this information, educators can become less biased in their opinions and develop nonjudgmental attitudes toward stepfamilies. Teacher expectations and ratings of children from different family types can no longer be ignored. It now appears inevitable that a teacher will have a student who lives in a single-parent family or a stepfamily. It is time for educators to evaluate their own perceptions of these different family types. Educators must be prepared to deal with these situations effectively and in a manner that enhances the learning capabilities of students from these families. This can be done most effectively by offering teachers the knowledge and information they need to dispel unfounded myths and stereotypes. School policies can also be revised to reflect a more sensitive consideration of special family units. Possible adjustments include duplicate report cards, multiple invitations to conferences and school functions, and revision of school data sheets reflecting two households.

Providing direct intervention to students can be done on a preventative as well as a treatment basis. Curriculum activities could be revised to include discussion of different family types, helping all students to recognize the uniqueness and differences of various families. On Mother's Day and Father's Day, students could be given the opportunity to make more than one card if they choose. These and other activities help children in stepfamilies feel less isolated and different, and increase the understanding of students in traditional nuclear families. Counseling can also be provided to students in groups or individually.

Parents can benefit from workshops and group meetings designed to address the unique aspects of stepparenting. Children can benefit indirectly by the increased knowledge and support which their parents gain through involvement in these types of programs. Prosen and Farmer (1982) identified six goals of outreach groups for stepparents.

> 1. To increase knowledge of the structural and cultural differences between stepfamilies and intact nuclear families.
>
> 2. To increase awareness of the positive and negative effects of remarriage on all members of the stepfamily and ways to change the negative to positive.
>
> 3. To enhance acceptance of the stepfamily situation and the building of positive attitudes towards new roles of family members.

4. To increase an awareness of the need for the remarried couple to invest efforts toward the bonding of their relationship separate from their relationship with the custodial and visiting children.

5. To increase biological and stepparents competencies in communication skills and the application of discipline strategies effective in the unique stepfamily situation.

6. To provide social support to help parents and stepparents reduce their role burdens and increase the effectiveness of their parenting.

Guidelines For Stepfamilies

1. It is difficult to have a new person or persons move into your "space," and it is difficult to be the "new" person or people joining a pre-existing group. For these reasons it helps to cut down feelings involved with "territory" if stepfamilies can start out in their own house or apartment.

2. Parent-child relationships have preceded the new couple relationship. Because of this, many parents feel that it is a betrayal of the earlier parent-child bond to form a primary relationship with their new partner. A primary couple relationship, however, is usually crucial for the continuing existence of the stepfamily, and therefore is very important for the children as well as for the adults. A strong adult bond can protect the children from another family loss, and it also can provide the children with a positive model for their own eventual marriage relationship. The adults often need to arrange time alone to help nourish this important couple relationship.

3. Forming new relationships within the stepfamily can be important, particularly when the children are young. Activities involving different subgroups can help such relationships grow. For example, stepfather and stepchildren might do some project together; or stepmother and a stepchild might go shopping together.

4. Preserving original relationships is also important and can help children experience less loss at sharing a parent. So at times it is helpful for a parent and biological children to have some time together, in addition to stepfamily activities.

5. Caring relationships take time to evolve. The expectation of "instant love" between stepparents and stepchildren can lead to many disappointments and difficulties. If the stepfamily relationships are allowed to develop as seems comfortable to the individuals involved, then caring between step-relatives has an opportunity to develop.

6. Subsequent families are structurally and emotionally different from first families. Upset and sadness is experienced by the children and at times by the adults as they react to the loss of their biological family or the loss of a dream of a perfect marriage. Acceptance that a stepfamily is a different type of family is important, as is the recognition that many upsetting behaviors result from these feelings of insecurity and loss.

7. Because children are part of two biological parents they nearly always have very strong pulls to both of these biological parents. These divided loyalties often make it difficult for children to relate comfortably to all the parental adults in their lives. Rejection of a stepparent, for example, may have nothing to do with

the personal characteristics of the stepparent. In fact, warm and loving stepparents may cause especially severe loyalty conflicts for children. As children and adults are able to accept the fact that children can care for more than two parental adults, then the children's loyalty conflicts can diminish and the new step-relationships improve. While it may be helpful to the children for the adults to acknowledge negative as well as positive feelings about the ex-spouses, children may became caught in loyalty conflicts and feel personally insecure if specific critical remarks are made continuously about their biological parent.

8. Courteous relationships between ex-spouses are important, although they are very difficult for many adults to maintain. If such a relationship can be worked out it is especially helpful to the children. In such instances the children do not get caught in the middle between two hostile parents, there is less need for the children to take sides, and the children are better able to accept and utilize the positive elements in their living arrangements.

   Direct contact between the adults can be helpful since it does not place the children in the sometimes powerful position of being message carriers between the biological pair. Although it may be strained, many ex-spouses are able to relate in regards to their children if the focus is kept on their mutual concern for the welfare of the children.

9. Children as well as adults in a stepfamily have a "family history." Suddenly these individuals come together and their sets of "givens" are questioned. Much is to be gained by coming together as a stepfamily unit to work out and develop new family patterns and traditions. Even when the individuals are able to recognize that patterns are not "right" or "wrong" it takes time and patience to work out satisfying new alternatives.

   Values (the underlying approach to life and general ways of doing things) do not shift easily. Within a stepfamily different value systems are inevitable because of different previous family histories, and tolerance for these differences can help smooth the process of stepfamily integration. Needs (specific ways individuals relate together, individual preferences, etc.) can usually be negotiated more quickly than can general values. Having an appreciation for and an expectation of such difficulties can make for more flexibility and relaxation in the stepfamily unit. Negotiation and renegotiation is needed by such families.

10. Being a stepparent is an unclear and at times difficult task. The wicked stepmother myth contributes to the discomfort of many women and cultural, structural and personal factors affect the stepparent role. Spouses can be very helpful to one another if they are able to be supportive with the working out of new family patterns. Stepparenting is usually more successful if stepparents carve out a role for themselves that is different from and does not compete with the biological parents.

While discipline is not usually accepted by stepchildren until a friendly relationship has been established (often a matter of 18 to 24 months), both adults do need to support each other's authority in the household. The biological parent may be the primary disciplinarian initially, but when the person is unavailable it is often necessary for that parent to give a clear message to the children that the stepparent is acting as an "authority figure" for both adults in his or her absence.

Unity between the couple is important to the functioning of the stepfamily. When the couple is comfortable with each other, differences between them in regards to the children can sometimes be worked out in the presence of the children, but at no time does it work out for either children or adults to let the children approach each adult separately and "divide and conquer". When disciplinary action is necessary, if it is not kept within the stepfamily household many resently feelings can be generated. For example, if visitation rights are affected, the noncustodial parent is being included in the action without his or her representation. Such a punishment, then, may lead to difficulties greater than the original behavior that caused the disciplinary action.

11. Integrating a stepfamily that contains teenagers can be particularly difficult. At this age adolescents are moving away from their families in any type of family. In single parent families teenagers have often been "young adults," and with the remarriage of a parent they may find it extremely difficult or impossible to return to being in a "child" position again.

    Adolescents have more of a previous "family history" and so they ordinarily appreciate having considerable opportunity to be part of the stepfamily negotiations, although they may withdraw from both biological parents and not wish to be part of many of the "family" activities.

12. "Visiting" children usually feel strange and are outsiders in the neighborhood. It can be helpful if they have some place in the household that is their own, i.e., a drawer or a shelf for toys and clothes. If they are included in stepfamily chores and projects when they are with the stepfamily they tend to feel more connected to the group. Bringing a friend with them to share the visit and having some active adult participation in becoming integrated into the neighborhood can make a difference to many visiting children. Knowing ahead of time that there is going to be an interesting activity, stepfamily game of monopoly, etc., can sometimes give visiting children a pleasant activity to anticipate.

    Noncustodial parents and stepparents often are concerned because they have so little time to transmit their values to visiting children. Since children tend to resist concerted efforts by the adults to instill stepfamily ideals during each visit, it is comforting to parents and stepparents to learn that the examples of behavior and relationships simply observed in the household can effect choices made by all the children later in their lives when they are grown and on their own.

13. Sexuality is usually more apparent in stepfamilies because of the new couple relationship, and because children may suddenly be living with other children with whom they have not grown up. Also there are not the usual incest taboos operating. It is important for the children to receive affection and to be aware of tenderness between the couple, but it may also be important for the couple to minimize to some extent the sexual aspects of the household, and to help the children understand and accept their sexual attractions to one another or to the adults.

14. All families experience stressful times. Children tend to show little day to day appreciation for their parents, and at times they get angry and reject their biological parents. Because stepfamilies are families born of loss the mixture of feelings can be even more intense than in intact families. Jealousy, rejection, guilt, and anger can be more pronounced, and therefore expectations that the stepfamily will live 'happily ever after' is even more unrealistic than it is in first families. Having an understanding and acceptance of the many negative as well as positive feelings can result in less disappointment and more stepfamily enjoyment.

15. Flexibility is the name of the game! It is likely that the children are more flexible than the adults. Adults have been forming their ideas of how to do things and how things "ought" to be done over a period of many years. In stepfamilies with their hazy boundaries, the comings and goings of the children, and the multitude of differences that exist, it is important to be flexible and shift with the constant alterations and changes. Change can be enriching and exciting if it is not met with resistance and fear.

16. Keeping with minimal contact between adults and children can lead to future satisfaction since time and maturity bring many changes. With some communication between stepfamily members satisfying interpersonal relationships often develop in the future when children become more independent in their relationships with both biological parents and with stepparents.

Note. From Stepfamilies, Myths and Realities by Emily B. Visher and John S. Visher. Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1979. Reprinted by permission.

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FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

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Introduction

Every year, families throughout the United States give their love, support, time and finances to adopt or provide foster care for children. This is not always an easy task, however, and school personnel could be supportive aids in helping adoptive and foster families adjust. Unfortunately, little reliable empirical research exists to help educators deal with these families.

First, most of the literature on foster care and adoption is based on case studies, survey data, or small and often atypical samples. The extent to which the results of most studies generalize to other settings is a troublesome question. The most rigorous research cited in this chapter involved adopted individuals as a means of exploring differences between hereditary and environmental influences. As such, issues related specifically to adoption were of no interest to the researchers. Second, research in the areas of foster care appear to lack central or organizing themes. Research efforts are primarily piecemeal. This chapter provides educators with background on research on adopted and foster children in the areas of age, reason for placement, intermediate care, quality of life, temperament and identity. Although the research is sometimes conflicting, it is a place to start in dealing with the families in your area.

Age of the Child

Adopted Children

Adoption has changed perceptually in the U.S. over the last 30 to 50 years. Greater acceptability of birth control and single parenting has reduced the number of newborns available for adoption. As a consequence, the mean age of children at the time of adoption has increased. Many of the children currently available for adoption leave behind tragic, if not traumatic, family circumstances (Dukette, 1975). The older child comes into an adoptive family with memories, expectations and established response patterns. Katz (1977) views adding children to a family as a time of potential crises which alters the existing equilibrium. The potential for crisis is greater when older children are involved. A survey by Bass (1975) corroborates this crisis perspective. The proportion of failed adoptions increased systematically with age of the child at the time of adoption. Offord, Sponte and Cross (1969) found the frequency and severity of antisocial behavior in adopted children was positively related to the age of the child at the time of adoption. Problem particular to older adoptees include sexual acting out, provocative language, and use of "ghosts" from previous parents and/or emotional withdrawal (Katz, 1977). In short, older children bring more "history" into a family. If that history contains painful and traumatic events, the child undoubtedly suffers. The addition of a child to family for any reason disrupts the equilibrium of the family and may precipitate a crisis. The older the child and the more traumatic the child's life events, the greater the potential for crisis. In some instances, this results in the child being rejected and returned to the adopting agency. Fortunately, far more adoptions work than do not.

Foster Children

Spaulding (1982) suggests older children are better able to cope with temporary separation from parents. Marr (1976) states six months to two years to be the most critical period of separation because most children are forming "attachments" to primary care givers. According to Marr, children who fail to form attachments by two years of age are not apt to at a later point in time. Failure to form attachments is frequently related to character disorders (i.e. juvenile delinquency, sociopathy) in later years. Marr listed length of separation and preparation for separation as additional considerations in foster placement. Both are heavily influenced by age. For example, Spaulding (1982) developed the Foster Life Indicator (FLI) to provide an index of the amount of time children spend in foster care. The FLI is the number of months in foster care divided by the age of the child. The FLI can range from 0 to 1.0. For example, if a two-year-old and an eight-year-old both spent six months in foster care the FLI for the two-year-old would be .25 while the FLI for the eight-year-old would be .06. Clearly, the same amount of foster care translates into large differences between younger and older children. Six months of foster care for a two-year-old is a quarter of his or her life, which is equivalent to two years of foster care for an eight-year-old. The second age-related point made by Marr (1976) was preparation for separation. Clearly, the capacity for children to comprehend and be prepared for foster placement increases with age. The assumption is that the more one understands about a situation, the less one fears the situation.

Consistent contact with a primary caregiver may be critical in forming attachments for children between ages six months and two years. Preparation for separation and length of separation are highly related to functions associated with age. Unfortunately, the majority of foster care children are placed before age six (Mnookin, 1973).

Reason for Placement

Adopted Children

Pannor and associates interviewed adopted children (Pannor and Nerlove, 1977) and parents who relinquished children for adoption (Pannor, Baran and Sorosky, 1978). By adolescence, most of the youths interviewed had received little information concerning why they were placed for adoption. In the absence of information, most adolescents felt that rejection was the main reason that parents place children for adoption.

Parents, primarily mothers, who relinquished infants for adoption listed a number of reasons for their decision. Primary among their concerns was the desire for the baby to have a family. Other reasons included: unprepared for adulthood; influenced by parents, social worker, physician, minister; and could not manage financially. For mothers who relinquished infants 10 to 30 years ago, 50 percent still felt "pain", "loss" and "mourning" over the child while 30 percent were "comfortable with their decision". Although both studies cited above included small samples, it is clear that biological mothers experience greater feelings for relinquished children than most of those children would predict.

More children are becoming available for adoption as a result of court action. Children in this category are victims of neglect or abuse. Kadushin (1967a) reviewed the conditions of 91 children for whom court action was taken. Poverty, limited parental education, physical neglect and parental pathology were common. Physical abuse was documented with four percent of the mothers and 10 percent of the fathers. Emotional indifference or neglect frequently accompanied physical neglect. If these results are generalized to the population, then many children currently available for adoption have definite needs relative to their past experiences.

Foster Children

Reasons for foster placement include: a) mental/physical illness of the care giver parent (the majority of foster children lived with one parent before placement; b) child behavior problems; c) physical neglect or abuse; d) "family problems"; and e) unwillingness or inability to assume/continue care (Mnookin, 1973). This list is not exhaustive and frequently foster placement is determined by more than one factor. In one study reviewed by Mnookin, only 10 percent of the biological parents objected to foster placement, and the majority of the objecting parents had been charged with "severe abuse or neglect." Gil and Bogart (1982) found foster children had a poor understanding about why they were placed. Although only 15 to 20 percent of children are placed in foster care because of their behavior, children typically feel responsible for their placement.

In many respects, children placed for adoption at later ages and children placed in foster care share similar backgrounds. Frequently, older children are in foster care two or three years before they are adopted (Kadushin, 1967). The main difference between adoption and continued foster care is frequently the extent that social service and legal personnel feel the children and their families may be reunited.

Intermediate Care

Adopted Children

Children typically spend an undetermined period of time in either institutional or foster care before adoption. Infants are more apt to receive institutional care than are older children. The potential for deleterious effects of institutional care on cognitive and emotional development in infants was documented four decades ago (Spitz, 1949). From that early research has grown an axiom that equates institutional care with cognitive and emotional retardation. Tizard and Reese (1974) pointed out that quality of stimulation is the key determinant for infant development, rather than the social setting per se. Tizard and Rees evaluated four-year-olds who had spent two to four years in institutional care. Roughly one-third of these children were adopted, another third were restored to biological parent(s), and the final third remained in institutional care. A control group of children raised by biological parents from birth to age four was also included. The intelligence quotients for the adopted, institutional, restored and control groups were 115, 105, 100 and 112 respectively. The quality of living conditions at the time of testing were most similar between adoptive and control (115 versus 112) and institutional and restored (105 versus 100). Apparently, early exposure to institutional care or continued institutional care as opposed to being returned to a marginally stimulating home did not adversely effect cognitive development. Institutional children were found to be more restless and less friendly and cooperative than adopted and restored children. The institutional children, however, were no more restless nor less friendly and cooperative than the control children.

Bohman and Siguardsson (1979) evaluated children who spent up to a year in institutional care before being adopted, restored to the biological parent, or placed in foster care. Adopted children performed equal to control children of the same sex at age 15. Restored and foster children performed significantly lower academically and displayed more signs of maladjustment than matched control groups. Within each group (adoptive, foster, restored) length of institutional care did not affect academic achievement or personal/social adjustment ratings.

Crowe (1974) found that adopted children of parents with antisocial personality disorders were adversely affected by length of temporary care (institutional or foster) while children from non-antisocial parents were not significantly affected by length of institutional or foster care.

It is important to note that the absence of negative effects from institutional care in the studies cited above occurred in situations where stimulation was rated as average to above average.

Foster Children

Spaulding (1982) found that 42 percent of the children in foster care in Deleware had spent over half their lives in foster care. Based on his data as well as other research, Spaulding concluded that 18 months of foster care serves as a "break point" in predicting whether a child will ever return home. If a child remains in foster care over a year and a half, he or she will probably never return home. Stability of care is another critical variable. Hampson and Tavormina (1980), for example, found that the number of different placements a child experiences in foster care relates more strongly to behavior problems than does total length of time in foster care.

Among foster children who had spent five years in foster care, Derdeyn (1977) found that 46 percent had been placed in three or more foster homes. Claburn, Magura and Chizeck (1977) found that, over a five-year period, one-third of the children who were returned to their biological homes were replaced in foster care while 16 percent returned to placement for at least a second time. Block (1981) also found an approximate 30 percent recidivism rate for children who had been returned home after foster placement. The recidivism rate was disproportionately higher for two-parent families (42.6 percent) than for one-parent families (27.0 percent).

Block (1981) and Hampson and Tavormina (1980) suggest greater attention be paid to the problems of the biological families, more careful selection of potential foster parents, and increased support and services to foster parents after a child has been placed to reduce replacements in the future.

Cognitive development does not adequately need to be compromised in institutional settings when adequate stimulation is available. The absence of a close, continuous, warm relationship with an adult in terms of emotional development is harder to assess. While one study reported greater interpersonal distress for institutional children, other studies have not. Still another study suggested biological factors influence the effect institutional care has on children. Among foster children, it is fairly well accepted that the number of foster placements correlates positively with incidence and severity of behavior problems. It is impossible to tell, however, whether increased placements cause emotional problems or whether children with emotional problems are moved more often to new foster homes.

Quality of Life

Adoptive Homes

A number of differences were found by Bachrach (1983) between the homes of adopted children and the homes of children raised by their biological parents. Among those differences were higher family income, older and more highly educated mothers, and greater frequencies of two parents in the adoptive homes. In contrast, approximately 66 percent of children with mothers who were never married lived below the poverty level. As reported earlier, Kadushin (1967) found poverty a consistent factor in the backgrounds of children who were adopted as a result of court decisions where parent rights were terminated. The majority of adoptive families studied by Bachrach had incomes at least three times above the poverty level. For a number of children, then, the socioeconomic level of their adoptive home is higher than for their biological home. The consequences of a more enriched environment are open to question.

The nature versus nurture controversy is far from settled. Munsinger (1975), for example, concluded in his review article that, "The strongest conclusion one can draw...is that the adoptive parents' home environment has little effect on their adopted children's intellectual growth" (p. 658). Scarr and Weinberg (1977), however, found higher than expected correlations between unrelated siblings living in the same home which, "suggests that IQ scores are more maleable than previously thought" (p. 170). Hardy-Brown, Plomin, Greenhalgh and Jax (1979) found that heredity affected the IQs of their adopted sample significantly more than environmental factors. Tizard and Rees (1974), however, found the mean IQ of adopted children was almost a full standard deviation higher than the mean IQ of children restored to their biological parent(s). The children studied by Tizard and Rees had spent two to four years in institutional care prior to adoption or restoration. Fisch, Bilek, Deinard and Chang (1976) found the socioeconomic advantage of adoption influenced childrens' height, weight and academic achievement, but not intelligence. Studies on the emotional adjustment of adopted children are also equivocal.

A common conception regarding adoptive parents is that they are qualitatively different than biological parents. Adoptive parents have been viewed as almost obsessed with their nonbiological relationship with their children. They have been characterized as: a) developing a "neurotically exaggerated closeness" (Fisch, Bilek, Deinard & Chang, 1976, p. 499) with their children; b) viewing the child as a, "symbol of their infertility" (Schwartz, 1975, p. 991); and c) vulnerable to parent-child attachment problems (Austand & Simmons, 1978).

The equivocal status as to whether adopted children demonstrate more, different, or greater forms of emotional/behavioral disorders than non-adopted children has been noted by several authors (Fisch, et al., 1976; Schwartz, 1975; Kadushin, 1967b).

The relational rather than causal nature of the data allow for any number of conclusions. Genetically oriented researchers find little evidence for environmental influence on intelligence or emotional adjustment. Those who stress environmental factors find intellectual advantages for the majority of adopted children. Researchers committed to the importance of past traumas in explaining current problems or the belief that adoptive parents harbor a unique type of neuroticism typically find differences in either kind or quantity of problems experienced by adopted children over nonadopted children. Depending upon the predilections of the researcher, both nature and nurture seem to have significant and insignificant effects on the intellectual and emotional development of adopted children. In short, the literature will support any and all biases.

Foster Homes

Eastman (1979) characterized the foster family as an open system in contrast to most nuclear families which she considers as semiclosed. Eastman suggests nuclear families are not open to strangers; particularly when under stress or at times of turmoil. A foster family's, "willingness to allow foster children and agency personnel into the family system clearly indicates [an open system]" (p. 565). Eastman considers the necessity for foster families to operate from an open system as a potential source of stress for several reasons. Issues of separateness and connectedness are considered basic components of family life.

Foster families are faced with including foster children in the family but not so completely that removal of the foster child is traumatic for the family and the child. Systems are imbued with the ability to assume identities such as monolithic, multiple and vague. Eastman says that foster families possess vaque identities because of their porous boundaries. Eastman says that foster families are "asked to fulfill a role that is not only new to them but ill-defined. This vague system identity can only add to the stress and breakdown of early placements of foster children that the literature characterizes as common" (p. 567).

Systems also experience stress each time a new member enters. In foster families, initial placements cause greater stress than later placements. Consequently, change and adaptability are hallmark requirements for foster families. A foster family "must be able to undergo change and transition while not changing so rapidly that it cannot tolerate the stress" (Eastman, 1979, p. 568). Eastman recommended that refined procedures are needed to identify appropriate families for foster care. Increased efforts in helping families cope with the stress produced by encorporating new members into the family are also necessary.

In contrast to the systems approach, Sanderson and Crawley (1982) assessed the personal characteristics of successful and unsuccessful foster parents. The majority of unsuccessful homes had been terminated for failing to meet state and local requirements for client care. The remaining families requested termination. Successful families had provided foster care for at least a year. Foster parents were classified according to the six personality structures advanced by John L. Holland. Respectively, more of the successful female and male providers were conventional and realistic than would be predicted by chance. Conventional females were summarized as, "highly conformist, respect authority, and are orderly as well as practical", while realistic males were described as, "strongly masculine and practical but rather unsociable and who have a strong preference for physical activity over thinking and feeling' (Sanderson & Crawley, p. 520).

Swick and Hanley (1980) consider foster parents as needing to: a) be prepared to receive a child on extremely short notice; b) be capable of dealing with abused or neglected children; c) be able to relate to the biological parents in a constructive fashion; d) provide a nurturing environment for the foster child but in the framework of temporary services; e) understand and interact efficiently with social service agencies; f) help biological children cope and interact with foster children; and g) promote the child's successful interaction with school and other community agencies. Given the many varied demands placed on them, it is interesting to note in which areas foster parents are most interested in receiving training. Noble and Euster (1981) found over half their sample of 52 foster parents were interested in: a) the rights and responsibilities of foster parents; b) managing the foster child's behavior; and c) communicating with the child, caseworker and other agency personnel. Communication difficulties and unavailability of caseworkers were listed most frequently by a sample of 34 foster mothers as major problems they had experienced with foster care (Hampson & Tavormina, 1980). Value differences between foster parents and social workers may also play a role in communication difficulties. Haines, Schumm and Kennedy (1981) found social workers' attitudes were more permissive than foster parents in the area of sexual development. For other aspects of child development, the differences between foster parents and social workers were not significant.

Data collected and literature reviewed by Hampson and Tavormina (1980) suggest foster parents tend to have lower than average education and incomes. Fox and Acuri (1980) contend the average intellectual and academic performance of foster children approximates that of low-income children living with natural parents.

McIntyre and Lounsbury (1980) were less optimistic about the emotional development of foster children. In research with 30 kindergarten/elementary-aged children, McIntyre and Lounsbury found difficulties in the areas of delay of gratification, mother-child relations, identification with family, membership, and internalization of adult values.

The level of parental education and income is higher for adoptive than foster parents. What these socioeconomic indicators mean for the prospective development of the children is open to debate. The relational rather than causal nature of the research leaves room for any number of conclusions. For example, studies on maladjustment of adopted children have found: a) a cluster of characteristics occurring more frequently in adopted versus nonadopted clinical children; b) no cluster of characteristics occurring more frequently in adopted versus nonadopted clinical children; and c) no greater incidence of emotional/behavioral problems in adopted versus nonadopted nonclinical children. The same degree of confusion exists regarding cognitive development in adopted children.

Studies on the cognitive and emotional development of foster children are extremely limited. The most that can be concluded is that, in at least one small sample, foster care did not appear to have significant adverse influences on cognitive development while in another small sample, emotional immaturity was noted for elementary aged foster care children.

Adaptability/Temperament

Adopted Children

There are many factors that determine personality development. Offspring of psychopathological parents removed in infancy and raised by nonpsychopathological adoptive parents has been one of the prime avenues for investigating a biological component for deviance and personality. By comparing adopted children to biological and adoptive parents, a genetic component has been suggested for: a) patterns of personality and interests (Grotevant, Scarr & Weinberg, 1977); b) hyperactivity (Cadoret, Cunningham, Loftus & Edwards, 1975; Morrison & Stewart, 1973); c) primary affective disorders (Cadoret, 1978a); d) schizophrenia (Rosenthal, Wender, Seymour, Schubringer, Welner & Rieder, 1975); and e) antisocial behavior (Cadoret, 1978b; Crowe, 1974). Cadoret et al. (1975) originally thought the temperament traits of the "difficult child" (Thomas & Chess, 1977) was related to sociopathy in one or both biological parents. A more refined follow-up study (Maurer, Cadoret & Cain, 1980), however, not only failed to support the earlier finding but found psychiatric problems in one of the adoptive parents as a significant predictor of male difficult temperament. This somewhat clouds the meaning of Thomas and Chess' (1977) finding that reliable and consistent differences in responsiveness, activity, persistence, etc. are present from birth. Although Thomas et al. were not arguing for a total genetic transmission of personality, they did believe that a biological factor helps shape our temperament and subsequent adaptation to environmental events.

Kadushin (1967a), for example, considers reactivity and temperament as central in explaining why some children are able to overcome traumatic events while others are permanently marred. As a result of "biological determination....one child's trauma....may be another child's inconvenience" (p. 29). Contrary to what might be anticipated, approximately 80 percent of the 91 adoption cases studied by Kadushin were considered by the adoptive parents successful in spite of abuse, neglect and poverty prior to adoption. This rate is typical of what Kadushin found in his review of similar studies concerning the success of adoption as viewed by the adoptive parents.

The interaction between biological and environmental factors makes the prediction of a child's adjustment following adoption difficult if not impossible. Biological factors allow for differences in the way children respond to their environments. This is confounded by the different environments each child experiences in both the biological and adoptive homes as well as the environmental reactions elicited by the children's responses.

Foster Children

The temperament and personality of foster children also affects foster care outcomes. Mnookin (1973) reviewed literature suggesting a positive relation between the number of replacements while in foster care and the extent to which the child is disturbed. Disturbed children experience more replacements, which may increase their level of disturbance. Childrens' adjustment reactions to stress have mainly been investigated from the perspective of identifying common characteristics among children rather than promoting the importance of the interaction between the individual and the situation. Norton (1981) listed four stages children experience when they are placed in foster care. These stages include shock, protest, despair and attachment. During the shock stage children experience such response patterns as, "wakefulness, sleepwalking, nightmares, night terror, teeth grinding and upper respiratory infections" (Norton, p. 157). During the protest stage, the child, "will experience anxiety, anger, helplessness and weeping" (Norton, p. 158). The despair stage is marked by helplessness and minimal involvement by the child with his or her environment. The detachment stage is equivalent to adjustment and has the foster child beginning to replace old relationships with new ones and exhibiting greater emotional involvement with immediate people and events. The intensity and duration of each stage varies with such factors as age, sex, past history and frequency of foster home placements, intensity of emotional reaction, and help available to the child during the adjustment process. Although fixed and unitary stages are predicted, the intensity and duration of stages or the adjustment process varies. Regardless of the treatment received from biological parents, children still experience a serious sense of loss, uncertainty and anxiety when they are removed from their parents (Bard, 1977; Norton, 1981).

Thomas (1971) cited specific difficulties faced by foster children that frequently interfere with movement through the developmental process. Thomas listed disruption in self-image and identity, adjustment to a new family, and uncertainty regarding the status of ties and relations with biological parents as key factors that may affect foster children's cognitive and emotional development and sense of autonomy.

McIntyre and Lounsbury (1980) found a sample 30 foster children tested as having poor impulse-control, low role-taking capacity for others' perspectives and feelings, and low identification with family structures and members.

Timberlake (1978) observed and tested 56 first-grade children placed in foster care because of physical abuse. A number of the children had repetitive behavior patterns of depression and aggressive behavior. Interviews with teachers and foster parents led Timberlake to conclude that continuing aggressive behavior by the children increases the amount of subsequent rejection the children would experience. This was supported by the finding that overt expression of aggression correlated .79 with foster home replacements. Timberlake felt treatment efforts should include grief counseling, social skills training to decrease aggression, improvement of self-concept, and the development of social relationships.

Marr (1976) considered age at separation, quality of mother-child relationship, extent of contact with biological parents, length of separation, individual differences in children, and preparation for separation important factors in the child's adjustment.

Although there is considerable interest in identifying grieving or adjustment stage, a number of problems exist. First, individual characteristics of people and situations appear to produce a marked effect on the outcome of foster placement. The extent to which individuality impedes or supersedes the progression of adjustment stages is unknown. Second, the extent of variance in the adjustment process allowed before the child is considered maladjusted is undetermined. While the concept of uniform adjustment phases may be appealing, there is little research to empirically validate such a theory.

Identity Issues

Adopted Children

Schwartz (1975) and Stone (1972) question telling adopted children they were chosen because they are special. According to these authors, the child may begin to question why they are special and what would happen if he or she lost that "special" quality. Schwartz recommended telling a child that the parents wanted a child, and that when they saw the child, they liked him or her, and the child seemed to like them.

By middle childhood, Schwartz (1975) feels children pass through a phase where being different is difficult to tolerate and knowing one is adopted accentuates a child's feeling of difference. The child needs "specific and realistic information about the past and adoption" (Schwartz, p. 992). Schwartz also feels information about the biological parents allows the child to develop a "complete sense of identity," and to "direct the normal feelings of rejection and desertion toward the appropriate person" (p. 993). Actual searching for biological parents typically occurs during late adolescence and early adulthood. Schwartz feels such activities during preadolescence signal a need for professional consultation.

Pannor and Nerlove (1977) provided an innovative program for adoptive parents and adolescents to explore mutual concerns and feelings. The authors met with parents and children in separate groups. The parents dealt with issues of child rearing, feelings about adopting, and fear over their childrens' interest in locating their biological parents. Sessions with the children addressed reasons why children are placed for adoption, curiosity regarding the natural parents, and talking with their adoptive parents about their biological parents. Pannor and Nerlove felt that having parents and children meet separately allowed both groups to freely explore issues that may not have been covered in combined sessions.

Simpson, Timm and McCubbin (1981) interviewed 10 of 41 adopted individuals responding to Minnesota's open birth record. Concern over genetic issues was most often mentioned as a research for a parental search. More information about "background" and "natural curiosity" were the next most frequent responses. A search for personal identity was among the frequently stated reasons for initiating a parent search.

Foster Children

Marr (1976) maintains that contact with biological parents is a factor that influences a child's reaction to foster placement. Children who remain in contact with biological parents will generally experience less anxiety than children who have no contact with their biological families. Several programs have been developed to provide a sense of contact between parents and their children.

Beste and Richardson (1981) discussed the making of the Life Story Book which is an "organized presentation of the family background and problems, foster care placement and other life experiences" (p. 529). Relevant information, memorabilia and stories about the child and from the child are collected and periodically reviewed with the child. Natural parents are encouraged to contribute meaningful material to the project. Once initiated, the Life Story Book is maintained for and with the child to provide a sense of continuity and identity.

Davies and Bland (1978) outlined a program where foster parents serve as role models for parents. The authors identified four stages of role modeling. In stage one parents and foster parents work with professionals to explore feelings about their imposed relationship. In stage two, the strengths of the biological parents are emphasized while the foster parents learn child management skills. All activities are coordinated by professional staff. During stage three, the foster parents are primarily responsible for training biological parents in child management areas while the professional staff provides counseling. Stage four is the termination phase where professionals work with step and biological parents on feelings of separation. Davies and Bland did not include quantifiable data on the results of the program, but provided several case histories as a means of addressing the program's effectiveness.

In the absence of a formal program, Marr (1976) listed several ways foster parents can involve biological parents in positive ways with their child. Suggestions included: a) having the parent over for a meal, coffee, etc.; b) visit the parent; c) send cards/letters to parents on special days; d) maintain contact with the parents and ask for their advice and ideas when appropriate; and e) invite parents to special events and activities involving their child. Marr pointed out that showing acceptance for a child's parents also shows acceptance for the child, and maintains a sense of continuity in the child's life.

Continuity is a common thread through much of the material on this subject. For children adopted during infancy, questions of identity emerge around middle childhood. Open, reassuring communication between parent and child is very helpful in reducing fears and fantasies of the child. Maintaining open communication with children regarding questions about their adoption can reduce future anxiety and feelings of isolation during adolescence. For children adopted in childhood and foster children, the Life Story Book may be helpful in developing a sense of continuity. When strong efforts are being made to return a child to the biological family, the program outlined by Davies and Bland (1978) or the suggestions of Marr (1976) may help maintain a link between the child and his or her family.

Closing Statements

The literature on foster and adoptive families lacks the type of research necessary to support a set of well-defined conclusions. An attempt was made to organize studies into topic areas and note, if possible, where concensus or disagreement existed in the literature. For the most part, however, the reader is left to draw her or his own conclusions.

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